Routledge Studies in Islamic Philosophy

PHILOSOPHICAL SUFISM

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE SCHOOL OF IBN AL-'ARABĪ

Mukhtar H. Ali

ROUTLEDGE

Mukhtar Ali's *Philosophical Sufism* is his second major contribution to analyzing the intersection between the two disciplines, written in a clear and accessible language and deserving a wide readership. Having supervised his dissertation some years ago, I am gratified to see that he has emerged as a prominent scholar in this field of Islamic Studies.

Hamid Algar, *Professor Emeritus of Persian and Islamic Studies, University of California, Berkeley*

Exceptionally clear and clearly exceptional, *Philosophical Sufism* presents us with an analytically rigorous and spiritually sensitive explication of the main doctrines of the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī, which dominated spiritual and intellectual life in the pre-modern and early modern Islamic world for well over six hundred years. As such, this book recommends itself to not only intellectual historians and professional philosophers, but also those who would like to bring the riches of the Sufi metaphysical tradition to bear upon the impoverished scene of contemporary Islamic thought.

Mohammed Rustom, *author of Inrushes of the Heart: The Sufi Philosophy of ʿAyn al-Quḍāt*

Philosophical Sufism is a very welcome addition to Islamic studies. Mukhtar Ali's balanced presentation of the intersections of philosophy and Sufism manages to maintain a balance that is wide-ranging, yet structured; accessible, yet profound. Lucidly written, with careful treatments of the key authors and texts of this important intellectual phenomenon, *Philosophical Sufism* will be invaluable for both researchers and instructors.

Cyrus Ali Zargar, *author of The Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism*

Philosophical Sufism offers a highly accessible account of Islamic mysticism in the language of ratiocination. Undergraduates and adepts alike will benefit from the overview of Sufi themes and scholarly literature. Its pedagogical value lies in the clarity of discussion, the author's effortless style and firm grasp of the topics. An indispensable contribution that bridges the gap between Islamic philosophy and mysticism.

Harun Rasiah, *Associate Professor of Ethnic Studies, California State University*

With skillful erudition, Mukhtar Ali distills the central philosophical tenets of the school of Ibn al-ʿArabi, systematically covering ontology, epistemology, teleology, human vicegerency, the nature of imagination, and the relation between the macrocosm and microcosm. As one of very few introductory texts on the subject, it will prove invaluable particularly to students.

Atif Khalil, *author of Repentance and the Return to God: Tawba in Early Sufism*

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Philosophical Sufism

Analyzing the intersection between Sufism and philosophy, this volume is a sweeping examination of the mystical philosophy of Muḥyī-l-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 637/1240), one of the most influential and original thinkers of the Islamic world. This book systematically covers Ibn al-ʿArabī's ontology, theology, epistemology, teleology, spiritual anthropology and eschatology.

Although philosophy uses deductive reasoning to discover the fundamental nature of existence and Sufism relies on spiritual experience, it was not until the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī that philosophy and Sufism converged into a single framework by elaborating spiritual doctrines in precise philosophical language. Contextualizing the historical development of Ibn al-ʿArabī's school, the work draws from the earliest commentators of Ibn al-ʿArabī's oeuvre, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūūnawī (d. 673/1274), ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. ca. 730/1330) and Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350), but also draws from the medieval heirs of his doctrines Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1385), the pivotal intellectual and mystical figure of Persia who recast philosophical Sufism within the framework of Twelver Shīʿism and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), the key figure in the dissemination of Ibn al-ʿArabī's ideas in the Persianate world as well as the Ottoman Empire, India, China and East Asia via Central Asia.

Lucidly written and comprehensive in scope, with careful treatments of the key authors, *Philosophical Sufism* is a highly accessible introductory text for students and researchers interested in Islam, philosophy, religion and the Middle East.

Mukhtar H. Ali is a Research Fellow at the Warburg Institute, School of Advanced Studies, University of London. He specializes in Sufism, Islamic philosophy and ethics, and has published widely in various peer-reviewed venues. He has also translated several works in classical and contemporary Islamic metaphysics, which include *The Principles of Correspondences* (2013) and *The New Creation* (2018) and *The Horizons of Being: The Metaphysics of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī* (2020).

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Philosophical Sufism

An Introduction to the School of Ibn al-ʿArabī

Mukhtar H. Ali

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A Note on Names and Transliteration

For the sake of simplification, I have not used the definite article *al-* when referring to someone by his surname (*nisba*), for example Qūnawī, and not al-Qūnawī. Arabic and Persian words, proper names and book titles have been transliterated according to the standards set by the *International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*. Translations of the Qurʾān are my own, unless stated otherwise.

بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

Introduction

The spiritual teachings of the Qurʾān have always played a central role in the life of Muslims who aspired to refine their character through God-consciousness, devotions and contemplation. There was an implicit understanding that true knowledge was attained through self-purification and the illumination of the heart.[1] On this basis, one would model himself upon the perfect character of the Prophet and thus attain nearness to God. While these ideals are explicit in the Qurʾān and hadith, and since Islamic spirituality encompasses both an inward and outward dimension, spiritual masters over time identified the true nature of the soul and the detailed path to God. The trajectory of spiritual development of the soul was called "wayfaring" (*sulūk*), which is the spiritual movement through states and stations to reach the ultimate truth, reality or the divine presence.[2] Towards the end of the second/eighth century certain identifiable teachings and practices became codified in manuals of spirituality. Historically, this came to be called Sufism, which was not a separate sect of Islam, but a methodology underlying religious devotions and an inner quest to understand and attain reality. Sufism, furthermore, developed over time as a cultural phenomenon with the formation of orders, specific practices, rites of initiation and various types of esoteric knowledge.

The nascent intellectual climate of Islam ushered in new branches of knowledge through the translation of Greek works, and philosophy, among other disciplines, entered the Muslim mindset. In the Islamic context, Greek philosophy could be characterized by two distinct trends, one that followed the methodology of Plato (428–347 BCE), who had a predilection for mysticism and the other Aristotle (384–322 BCE), whose philosophy was characterized by logic and discursive reasoning. These influences also played into the epistemological divide that was already fomenting in Islamic culture, namely, the divergence between reason and intuition. Those who inclined towards esotericism held that true knowledge can only be attained by spiritual experience, inspiration and unveiling.[3] Whereas those who inclined towards the exoteric, such as the legalists, theologians and philosophers, relied upon either textual evidence, rational proofs or a combination of both. Others attempted to reconcile the esoteric with the exoteric, claiming that

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they are two sides of the same coin, or three realities expressed as *sharīʿa* (law), *ṭarīqa* (way) and *ḥaqīqa* (reality). Based on a certain narration from the Prophet, thinkers such as Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1385), divided religious life into these three levels:[4]

> Know that *sharīʿa* is a term denoting the divine path, which contains principles and branches, permissions (*rukhas*) and resolutions (*ʿazāʾim*), the good and the excellent. *Ṭarīqa* is the way of maximum precaution, its superlative and firmest aspect. Whatever path leads man to tread the firmest, most superlative path is called *ṭarīqa*, whether it concerns speech, action, quality or state. As for *ḥaqīqa*, it is the affirmation of something through the experience of unveiling, witnessing or a state. That is why it is said that *sharīʿa* is that you worship Him, *ṭarīqa* is that you attain His presence and *ḥaqīqa* is that you witness Him. It is also said that *sharīʿa* is that you fulfil His commands, *ṭarīqa* is that you uphold His commands and *ḥaqīqa* is that you subsist through them.[5]

Historically, Sufism and philosophy have had divergent epistemologies. Philosophy uses deductive reasoning to discover the fundamental nature of existence, whereas mysticism relies primarily on spiritual experience. However, philosophy in its original sense as "the love of wisdom" can be applied more generally to denote any intellectual activity that posits an ontology and epistemology in an attempt to discover the true nature of things. We can say that "intellectual" is not limited to the faculty of reason alone but includes spiritual modalities of perception related to the heart or spirit.[6] In this sense, mysticism can be considered a branch of philosophy. Even within Sufism, there have been various methodologies, some that have incorporated reason and some that have relied on spiritual insight or intuition alone. It was not until the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī that philosophy and Sufism converged into a single framework where the school of philosophical Sufism came into being. What we find in this school is the elaboration of spiritual doctrines in precise philosophical terminology. In other words, the Sufism of Ibn al-ʿArabī is not only a way of conduct or personal wayfaring, but it embodies an entire cosmology and philosophical worldview. We will return to the specifics of this school momentarily.

An Overview of the Philosophical Schools

To better understand the nature and significance of philosophical Sufism, one must begin with an overview of the main philosophical movements that emerged in the Islamic world. Broadly speaking, these are the schools of scholastic theology (*kalām*), Peripateticism (*mashāʾ*),[7] Illuminationism (*ishrāq*), Transcendent Philosophy (*al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliya*)[8] and Sufism (*taṣawwuf*).[9] Caner Dagli in his *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture* has meticulously provided an account of the theoretical and historical

background leading up to the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī, highlighting the interaction between theology, philosophy and Sufism.

As early as the eighth century, the school of scholastic theology, or *kalām*, refers to the speech, argument or dialectic used to establish correct doctrinal views and defense of the tenets of the religion established by the Qurʾān and *sunna*.[10] It was called "*kalām*" possibly because many theological works began with, "*al-kalāmu fī kadha*" (the doctrine is as follows), or from the word itself, which means "to speak"; namely, to speak about that which one must not discuss, such as the Essence of God and His attributes. The name may also have been derived from the very first issue that was discussed in this discipline, which was whether the speech of God is eternal or created. Scholastic theology provided answers to the most important metaphysical questions such as the existence of God but also debated issues concerning the divine attributes, God's relation to creation, and freewill and determinism. However, many theological arguments did not always have a sound methodological basis, often resorting to religious and doctrinal presuppositions. For this reason, the proponents of this school were criticized for being entangled in numerous fallacies and polemics. The theologians generally did not hold the Sufis in a positive light, nor did they depend on unveiling to discover truth; rather, they relied solely on scriptural evidence from the Qurʾān and hadith. Nevertheless, some theologians accepted unveiling as an epistemological method, particularly, the towering figure, Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī (d. 505/1111), who became a devotee of Sufism towards the end of his life.[11] The most important theologians were Abū-l-Ḥasan al-ʿAshʿarī (d. 324/936), Abū Manṣūr al-Māturīdī (d. 333/944), ʿAbd al-Jabbār b. Aḥmad (d. 416/1025), Abū-l-Ḥusayn al-Baṣrī (d. 478/1085), Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 607/1210), Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī (d. 672/1274), Ḥasan b. Yūsuf (ʿAllāma) Ḥillī (d. 726/1325) and ʿAḍud al-Dīn al-Ījī (d. 756/1355).

In the Islamic world, the Peripatetic school is attributed to the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who systematically established its most fundamental arguments. It was named "peripatetic" based on Aristotle's habit of lecturing while walking (*mashyī*), or perhaps because premises lead to their conclusions in a systematic and logical manner, like walking from point A to point B. Yaʿqūb b. Isḥāq al-Kindī (d. ca. 256/870) was the first Peripatetic philosopher in the Islamic tradition. The other key figures include Abū Naṣr al-Fārābī (d. 339/950),[12] the "second teacher" after Aristotle, and ʿAlī Ibn Sīnā (d. 428/1037), known as Avicenna in the West, who is arguably the most influential philosopher of Islam, and Naṣīr al-Dīn al-Ṭūsī, the Persian polymath who was a follower of Ibn Sīnā.

The salient feature of this school is the claim that truth can be ascertained through rational argumentation and deductive reasoning, and that it is not possible for man to arrive at truth without the aid of deductive reasoning. The second feature of this school is the attention paid to metaphysical concerns. The Peripatetics did not rely on unveiling to arrive at truth, rather they used deductive reasoning and logic. From the point of view of mysticism,

which asserts that truth and reality is known through unveiling and witnessing, this methodology is held in a negative light.

The scholars of law also criticized the Peripatetics for not adhering to the tenets of the Law (*sharīʿa*) and acknowledging its sanctity. Peripatetic philosophy held that truth is obtained by rational thought alone, which essentially undermined the basis of jurisprudential principles that were derived directly from revelation and prophetic sayings. The philosopher was considered a heretic and disbeliever on account of his strict adherence to reason and intellectual proofs.

However, not every Peripatetic philosopher rejected unveiling as a means of arriving at truth, and many were, in fact, compelled to accept unveiling. One clear example is Ibn Sīnā, who in the ninth section of his *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* (Remarks and Admonitions) skillfully discusses the stations of the Sufis and describes various modalities of perception and types of esoteric knowledge.[13] Furthermore, it was not only Aristotle who exerted an influence in the Islamic world, but Neoplatonic emanationist motifs and Pythagorean natural philosophy were promoted by thinkers such as the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* (Brethren of Purity), an erudite secret society living in fourth/tenth century Baṣra.[14] Their encyclopaedic work, *Rasāʾil Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ* assimilated Hermetic, Platonic, Aristotelean, Neopythagorean, Buddhist, Manichean and Zoroastrian teachings into four main branches of learning according to the following divisions: Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Sciences of the Soul, and Intellect and Theology. Whether or not mediated by the *Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ*, Pythagorean and Platonic ideas were profoundly influential in the development of the schools of Illuminationism and philosophical Sufism.

The school of Illumination was pioneered by Shihāb al-Dīn al-Suhrawardī (d. 587/1191) whose main proponent in the Greek tradition was Plato followed by Plotinus. The central idea of this school is that truth is known through divine illumination or unveiling (*kashf*) after the soul has become purified. This path of arriving at truth is not restricted to self-purification and divine illumination, but intellectual reasoning, reinforced by logic and analytical deduction. Arguments put forth by the theologians were also incorporated in this school insofar as they reflected the teachings of the Qurʾān and *Sunna*. Although this school was anti-Peripatetic, it was still a fusion of reason, revelation and divine illumination. Many of the other schools, including philosophical Sufism, drew from this school and Mullā Ṣadrā described it in his commentary on Suhrawardī's central work, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (The Philosophy of Illumination) as "the apple of the eye of the gnostics and the people of witnessing."[15] Key figures include Quṭb al-Dīn Shirāzī (d. 709/1309), Jalal al-Dīn Dawānī (d. 908/1502) and Ibn Abī Jumhūr Aḥsāʿī (d. after 906/1501).

The school of Transcendent Philosophy was founded by Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Shīrazī (d. 1050/1640), popularly known as Mullā Ṣadrā, the monumental figure of philosophy in Safavid Iran.[16] Ṣadrā's most famous work, *al-Ḥikmat*

al-mutaʿāliya fi-l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa (The Transcendent Philosophy Concerning the Four Intellectual Journeys), is a compendium of traditional philosophy that synthesizes rational and mystical approaches, and includes ontology, natural philosophy, theology, eschatology and soteriology.[17] The main feature of this school is that it combines three epistemic modalities: reason, revelation and inspiration. It can be said that Mullā Ṣadra's methodology is a veritable synthesis of all prior Islamic learning up until his day, amalgamating the works of Aristotelian Peripatetic philosophy represented by Ibn Sīnā, the School of Illumination of Suhrawardī, scholastic theology and the philosophical Sufism of Ibn al-ʿArabī.[18]

As for Sufism, the salient feature of this school is that witnessing and unveiling is the only way for the human being to arrive at truth. The term Sufi originates from the Arabic word *taṣawwuf*, which means the wearing of wool, perhaps referring to the woolen garments worn by the early ascetics.[19] In Arabic, the terms *ʿirfān, maʿrifa* or *ʿilm* are frequently used to denote this discipline. Sufism traces its origin back to the Prophet himself but its pioneers were Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 110/728), Rābiʿa al-ʿAdawiya (d. 185/801), Dhū-l-Nūn al-Miṣrī (d. 246/860), Abū Bakr al-Shiblī (d. 334/946), Abu-l-Qāsim al-Junayd (d. 298/910), Abū Yazīd al-Biṣṭāmī (d. 234/848 or 261/875), Sahl al-Tustarī (d. 283/896), al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr al-Ḥallāj (d. 309/922), ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān Hujwīrī (465/1072), ʿAyn al-Quḍāt Hamadanī (d. 525/1130) and Ibn al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1234).[20] Other famous Sufi masters who can be described as being on the "path of love" (*madhhab-i ishq*) include Aḥmad Ghazālī (d. 520/1126), Farīd al-Dīn ʿAttar (d. 618/1221), Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī (d. 672/1273) and Shams al-Dīn Ḥāfiẓ (d. 792/1390).

However, the culminating figure of Sufism who developed the most profound and original mystical worldview is the greatest Shaykh (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*), Muḥyī-l-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī (d. 638/1240). His magnum opus, *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*, is 560 chapters, covering virtually every sphere of Islamic knowledge, and his most influential work, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (The Gemstones of Wisdom) has been the subject of over one hundred commentaries. Ibn al-ʿArabī's Sufism is epistemologically at odds with philosophy despite their shared terminology. He considered philosophy as counterproductive to attaining reality:

> None of the scholars and philosophers have discovered the knowledge of the soul and its reality except the men of God, namely, the Messengers and the Sufis. As for the rationalists and speculative thinkers from among the theologians and ancients, none have discovered the soul, its essence and its reality. Reasoning will never yield this knowledge. Thus, whoever seeks it by way of reasoning does so in vain. "They are those whose efforts in the life of this world are misguided while they suppose that they are doing good" (18:104). He who seeks the matter by other than its path will not achieve its realization.[21]

In this statement, Ibn al-ʿArabī is referring not only to the knowledge of the soul but also to the nature of existence. There are, however, two views within this school, one that relies entirely on unveiling and one that accepts both unveiling and reasoning. The second method was employed by the earliest commentators of Ibn al-ʿArabī's works, such as Qūnawī, Jandī, Kāshānī and Qayṣarī. However, the Sufis never considered reason as a means for arriving at truth but relied on unveiling and witnessing through purification of the heart and the soul. This purification was enough to reach the goal, but the texts of philosophical Sufism were intended to explain spiritual experience in philosophical language. Since philosophy is the closest discipline to Sufism, the earliest commentators attempted to reconcile knowledge gained from spiritual experience in philosophical terminology; it was not an attempt to arrive at the truth by means of reason alone.

The School of Ibn al-ʿArabī[22]

Philosophical Sufism here refers to the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Mohammed Rustom writes that it is called philosophical Sufism because:

> The central concern of the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī is with Being or *wujūd*, which is also the central concern of Islamic philosophy. Members of the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī did not invent an entirely new philosophical vocabulary to explain their teachings. Many of the technical terms and concepts with which they were working had been bequeathed from the well-developed traditions of Islamic philosophy and theology.[23]

Given that Ibn al-ʿArabī neither established a specific *madhab* or *ṭarīqa*, William Chittick notes that the term "school of Ibn al-ʿArabī" has been coined by Western scholars.[24] Most of the commentary on his works is both an attempt to unravel his teachings and elaborate upon the author's own insights and unveilings. In other words, we are investigating two aspects of the Greatest Master (*al-Shaykh al-Akbar*), his own writings and the writings of those who were in some way affiliated or influenced by him. James Morris remarks that "Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings were only the starting point for the most diverse developments, in which reference to subsequent interpreters quickly became at least as important as the study of the Shaykh himself."[25] This is because his works are a type of unfolding, a spiritual seed planted in the hearts of the gnostics. To see the fruits of those writings, one must wait for it to appear on the branch. These spiritual secrets are scattered throughout time and reveal themselves in the various forms and writings of the commentators, who were themselves great luminaries of the Islamic mystical tradition. Thus, the focus of the present work is the metaphysics of Ibn al-ʿArabī as expressed in his own writings and those of his commentators.

Even though Ibn al-ʿArabī wrote prolifically in classical Arabic, much of his writings are too complex even for native speakers. They are the

expressions of his visions and describe spiritual realities that are beyond the scope of ordinary understanding. Thus, a large part of grasping his ideas is mediated through the writings of his students and commentators, most of whom were Sufis and the people of spiritual insight. The students of his inner circle wrote the most authoritative commentaries. In this regard, his earliest and closest disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī (d. 673/1274) is key to the whole tradition.[26] Others in the lineage after Qūnāwī were his students Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī (d. ca. 700/1300), ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (d. 690/1291), Saʿīd al-Dīn al-Farghānī (d. ca. 699/1300) and Fakhr al-Dīn al-ʿIrāqī (d. 688/1289). Jandī's student was ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī (d. ca. 730/1330) and Kāshānī's student was Dawūd al-Qayṣarī (d. 751/1350).

Other prominent Sufis and proponents of his doctrines are the following, mentioned in chronological order: Saʿd al-Dīn al-Ḥammūya (d. 650/1252–53), ʿAzīz al-Dīn al-Nasafī (d. ca. 661/1262), Maḥmūd Shabistarī (d. 741/1340), Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī (d. 787/1385), ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī (d. ca. 832/1428), Shams al-Dīn al-Fanārī (d. 834/1431), Ṣāʾin al-Dīn Ibn Turka Iṣfahānī (d. 830/1437), ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī (d. 898/1492), Shams al-Dīn Lāhījī (d. 912/1507), Ḥamza Fanṣūrī (d. 933/1527), Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī (d. 1050/1640), Ismāʿīl Ḥakkī Bursawī, (d. 1137/1725) and ʿAbd al-Ghanī Nābulusī (d. 1143/1731).[27]

ʿAzīz al-Dīn al-Nasafī, one of the most important Sufis of the medieval period and author of *Maqṣad-i aqṣā*, integrated the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and Najm al-Dīn Kubrā. He was a disciple of Saʿd al-Dīn al-Ḥammūya (d. 650/1252–53), a friend of Qunāwī and also disciple of the founder of the Kubrāwī order.[28]

Maḥmūd Shabistarī is the greatest Persian poet associated with the school of philosophical Sufism. A masterpiece of Persian poetry, his *Gulshan-i rāz* (The Garden of Mystery) forms the basis of Lāhījī's 800-page commentary entitled *Mafātīḥ al-iʿjāz fī sharḥ gulshan-i rāz* (Keys of Wonder Commenting on the *Gulshan-i rāz*).[29] Lāhījī's opus is the most complete work on philosophical Sufism in the Persian language.[30]

Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, the pivotal intellectual and mystical figure of Persia was among the medieval heirs of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings, recasting philosophical Sufism within the framework of Twelver Shīʿism. Āmulī can be credited for the rapprochement between early Sufism, which was primarily a Sunni phenomenon and Shīʿism. In his most famous work, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār wa manbaʿ al-anwār* (The Compendium of Mysteries and Source of Lights),[31] he demonstrates that the essential reality of Sufism and Shīʿīsm are the same, and that Ibn ʿArabī's teachings are the esoteric interpretations of Shīʿī doctrine. His work is an indispensible manual for Shīʿī mysticism (*ʿirfān*) that coalesces the three epistemic modalities, reason (*ʿaql*), revelation (*naql*) and unveiling (*kashf*). Furthermore, it discusses some of the main doctrinal issues concerning divine unity, the nature of Prophethood, sainthood, unveiling and the various levels of Islam. Given that it covers both ontology and epistemology, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār* is a sourcebook for Shīʿī *ʿirfān*. Āmulī wrote one of

the longest commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* entitled *Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (The Text of Texts Commenting on the *Fuṣūṣ*).[32] He also wrote a Qurʾānic commentary in seven volumes entitled *al-Muḥīṭ al-aʿẓam* (The Supreme Ocean).[33]

ʿAbd al-Karīm al-Jīlī was a descendant of the Sufi saint ʿAbd al-Qādir Jī lānī (d. 561/1166), the eponymous founder of the Qādiriyya order. A visionary and Sufi saint, he wrote a seminal work summarizing the doctrines of Ibn al-ʿArabī entitled *al-Insān al-kāmil fī maʿrifat al-awākhir wa-l-awāʾil* (The Perfect Human Concerning the Knowledge of Ends and Beginnings).[34] James Morris remarks that Jīlī is "undoubtedly both the most original thinker and the most remarkable and independent mystical writer"[35] among the followers of Ibn al-ʿArabī.

Shams al-Dīn al-Fanārī was the first Ottoman jurist to become *Shaykh al-Islam* and a key contributor to the intellectual life of the nascent Ottoman state.[36] He wrote *Miṣbāḥ al-uns* (Lantern of Intimacy), a commentary on Qūnāwī's *Miftāh al-ghayb* (The Key to the Unseen) which is generally considered the most advanced text studied in philosophical Sufism. Chittick notes, "In the *madrasahs* of Iran, the *Miftāḥ* has been considered the most advanced work on metaphysics, and along with its commentary by Fanārī, was taught after the *Fusūs*."[37] Seyyed Hossein Nasr states that it is the "premier text for the teaching of theoretical gnosis especially in Turkey and Persia."[38]

Ibn Turka Iṣfahānī was an Illuminationist interpreter of Peripatetic philosophy and a commentator on Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings. His *Tamhīd al-qawāʿid* (Establishing the Principles)[39] is among the essential texts of philosophical Sufism. He also wrote a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* synthesizing the various philosophical schools.

> In his integration of Illuminationist theosophy with Peripatetic thought and philosophical mysticism, he is perhaps the most important figure in Islamic philosophy after Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, figuring as the key link in the chain [of philosophical thought stretching] between Mullā Ṣadrā, Suhrawardī and Ibn Sīnā.[40]

ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī was a key figure in the dissemination of Ibn al-ʿArabī's ideas in the Persianate world as well as the Ottoman Empire, India, China and East Asia via Central Asia. Jāmī enabled the widespread reception of Ibn al-ʿArabī's ideas beyond the central Islamic lands. Two of his works were translated into Chinese, *Ashiʿʿat al-lamaʿāt* (Rays from the "Flashes")[41] and *Lawaʾih* (Gleaming Lights).[42] Sachiko Murata writes, "The fact that Jāmī is the author of two of the four Islamic works translated into Chinese certainly suggests that it was difficult to study Islam in Chinese without being exposed to Ibn al-ʿArabī."[43] His first prose work was *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* (Critical Texts Commenting on the *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*), which is a commentary on Ibn al-ʿArabī's own ten-page distillation of the *Fuṣūṣ*

al-ḥikam, entitled *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ*. Jāmī wrote *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ* in both Arabic and Persian intending a wider audience unlike his *Sharḥ al-fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which is a detailed commentary of the *Fuṣūṣ* itself. His works also include *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Commentary on the Bezels of Wisdom), *Lawāʾiḥ* (Gleaming Lights), *Lawāmiʿ* (Sparks of Inspiration) and *Ashiʿat al-lamaʿāt* (Rays from the "Flashes"). Professor Hamid Algar notes, "It is a significant measure of his lifelong devotion to Ibn al-ʿArabī that his final, as well as his earliest, work in prose was devoted to the analysis of *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*."[44] Jāmī also influenced the Malay world through mystic poet Ḥamza Fanṣūrī's translation and adaptation of his *Lawāʾiḥ*.[45]

ʿAbd al-Ghanī Nābulusī, the eminent Sufi saint of Ottoman Syria, is the author of *Jawāhir al-nuṣūṣ fī ḥall kalimāt al-Fuṣūṣ* (Precious Texts in Resolving the Words of the *Fuṣūṣ*). The most popular and "widely read commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ* in the Arab world was written by the prolific Sufi author al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī."[46] In an autobiographical account of his devotion to Ibn al-ʿArabī, Nābulusī reports:

> It is well-known that I draw upon the Shaykh's words in all my states and that his books, in accord with the Qur'an, the Sunnah, and the consensus of the pious forefathers, are the pillar of my belief. In my turn I affirm his speech to others. For I was raised suckling at his two breasts from the time I was a child who knew nothing. I am his suckling child, son of the Shaykh al-Akbar, and he is my father.[47]

Ismāʿīl Hakkī Bursawī was an eminent Ottoman scholar and mystic who translated and commented on the *Fūṣūṣ* in Ottoman Turkish. His Qurʾānic exegesis, *Rūḥ al-bayān* (The Spirit of Elucidation) combines the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī with the earlier Sufi commentaries such as Aḥmad Samʾānī's *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ*.

In the following sections, we will identify Ibn al-ʿArabī's immediate circle and the formative figures of the early generations upon whose edifice the whole tradition relies. More than mere commentators, Qūnawī, Jandī, Kāshānī and Qayṣārī can be considered the architects of this school, each having studied the texts with his predecessor, or having "received" them by word and spiritual transmission.[48]

Ibn al-ʿArabī

ʿMuḥyī-l-Dīn Ibn al-ʿArabī, one of Islam's most influential thinkers and prolific writers, is referred to as the Greatest Master, *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*. He brought the esoteric dimension of Islam to new heights and created a comprehensive system of mystical thought that has permeated Islamic disciplines for the past seven hundred years. He was born in the Andalusian city of Murcia in southern Spain in 560/1165 and died in 638/1240 in Damascus. The name "Ibn al-ʿArabī" refers to a pure Arab ancestry from the lineage of

legendary Arabian poet, Ḥātim al-Ṭāʿī. He received his education in the traditional Islamic disciplines in the city of Seville, the cultural capital and crossroads between the Islamic world and Europe where he remained for some 30 years before migrating to the East. Claude Addas has written the definitive biography,[49] so this brief section focuses on a single aspect which distinguishes him from his followers.

While we consider the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī as philosophical Sufism, truth be told, there is very little philosophy proper in his works. Ibn al-ʿArabī was a visionary not a philosopher, and his writings originate from spiritual experience, not deductive reasoning. So, in applying the term "philosophy" to his writings, it should not be understood as discursive or analytical philosophy like that of Aristotle or Ibn Sīnā. In this sense, philosophy is diametrically opposed to Sufism, so the term philosophical Sufism is an inherent contradiction. But in another sense, if philosophy means the logic, elaboration and description of a metaphysical system studied separately from its epistemic origins, then it is the only way to describe his Sufism. He describes realities attained through spiritual experience in a language that resembles philosophy or theology, redefining terms as he creates a whole new metaphysical framework. Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> In what I have written, I have never had a set purpose, as other writers. Flashes of divine inspiration used to come upon me and almost overwhelm me, so that I could only put them from my mind by committing to paper what they revealed to me. If my works evince any form of composition, that form was unintentional. Some works I wrote at the command of God, sent to me in sleep or through a mystical revelation … My heart clings to the door of the divine presence, waiting mindfully for what comes when the door is opened. My heart is poor and needy, empty of every knowledge. When something appears to the heart from behind that curtain, the heart hurries to obey and sets it down in keeping with the prescribed limits.[50]

Ibn al-ʿArabī, in spite of his commitment to inspired knowledge, was conversant with the writings of the theologians and philosophers, specifically, al-Ghazālī, al-Kindī, al-Fārābī and Ibn Sīnā. He was also acquainted with the works of other Sufis such as ʿAbdallah al-Anṣārī (d. 481/1089), Abū ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Sulamī (d. 412/1021), Abū-l-Qāsim Qushayrī (d. 465/1072), Ḥārith Muḥāsibī (d. 243/857), Ḥakīm al-Tirmidhī (d. 298/910) and Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī (d. 386/996).[51] He was also familiar with other literary forms, stating:

> I have included in this book which I have entitled *Kitāb muḥāḍarāt al-abrār wa musamarat al-akhyār* (The Conference of the Pious and the Conversation of the Perfect), all kinds of literary forms, such as sermons, proverbs, unusual stories, chronicles of the past, a history of ancient Prophets, peace be upon them, records of both Arab and non-Arab

> kings, noble virtues, marvelous occurrences, prophetic narrations concerning the beginning of this affair and the origination of the world.[52]

Ibn al-ʿArabī's attitude towards philosophy was not entirely negative, since "not all knowledge of the philosopher is invalid"[53] but it was not sufficient to gain certitude of the inward, hidden realities behind the veil of phenomenal existence. In other words, the heart's perception is through spiritual insight (*baṣīra*), and the intellect's perception is through reflection. In the *Futūḥāt* he says:

> Is there something that cannot be obtained through unveiling (*kashf*) and spiritual experience (*wujūd*)? We say there is nothing and reject analytical reasoning all together because it causes confusion (*talbīs*) and untruthfulness. There is nothing that is not possible to know through unveiling and spiritual experience. Preoccupation with rational thought is a veil (*hijāb*). Others may reject [this position], but none of the people of God's Way denies it; only the rationalists and speculative thinkers (*ahl al-naẓar wa-l-istidlāl*) and the exoteric scholars who have no taste for spiritual states deny it. If any of them did experience such spiritual states like those of the divine sage Plato, then this is something extremely rare; those individuals are comparable to the men of unveiling (*kashf*) and spiritual experience (*wujūd*).[54]

Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī and his Students[55]

Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī is considered to be the greatest expositor of Ibn al-ʿArabī's works and the foremost of his students. Ibn al-ʿArabī and Qūnawī's father, Majd al-Dīn Isḥāq[56] were friends, and Ibn al-ʿArabī married his widow, becoming Qūnawī's stepfather. Many referred to Qūnawī as *al-Shaykh al-Kabīr*, the Grand Master, after Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Shaykh al-Akbar*, the Greatest Master.[57] While still in his mid-twenties he was granted permission (*ījāza*) to transmit all of Ibn al-ʿArabī's writings, having had the *Futūḥāt al-Makkiya*, as he states, "recited to me from beginning to end" a year earlier.[58] Qūnawī was the first to give structure to his master's teachings, systematizing and popularizing them through philosophical language. Jāmī says about Qūnawī, "It is impossible to understand Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings concerning the oneness of Being in a manner consistent with both intellect and sacred Law without studying Qūnawī's works."[59] The school of philosophical Sufism is largely a product of Qūnawī's recasting of Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrines into the language of philosophy in order to reach a larger audience. However, it should not be imagined that Qūnawī promoted analytical reasoning over intuition as a means of arriving at truth. His aim was to describe the realities witnessed by direct experience through the shared terminology of philosophy. Qūnawī says:

> Among the Greeks, the earlier sages or philosophers (*hukamāʾ*) based their teachings primarily upon the unveilings or openings (*fatḥ*) that they received as a result of spiritual practice, but after Aristotle, philosophy limited itself to those things that can be discerned by the intellect.
>
> In the first chapter, I will point out the level of rationality so that those of you who come across this and other works by the people of the Way should realize that if there was sufficiency and healing in rational proofs and dialectics, neither the prophets, messengers or their inheritors—the saints, who uphold and convey divine proofs—would have turned away from them.[60]

With respect to the historical characteristics that emerged from Qūnawī's writings, James Morris stresses some salient features of this development. The first is that Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings were maintained through the actual study of his texts, particularly, his famous work, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.[61] over which more than one-hundred commentaries have been written. Second, in the intellectual milieu in which Qūnawī was writing, there were deep intersections between philosophy, theology and Sufism.[62] We have in Qūnawī's own handwriting his personal copy of a set of glosses on Suhrawardī's *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq* (Philosophy of Illumination), as well as a set of glosses on Ibn Sīnā's *Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt* (Remarks and Admonitions) by the ʿAshʿarī theologian and philosopher, Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī.[63]

Qūnawī's interactions were not limited to the intellectual and literary domain, but he disseminated Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings through the initiatic spiritual transmission characteristic of Sufism, and through other personal or collegial relationships. Among his contacts were Persian mystical poet, Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, Awḥad al-Dīn Kirmānī (d. 635/1238), the *shaykh* of the Suhrawardiyya order, Saʿd al-Dīn Ḥammūya and Najm al-Dīn al-Rāzī (d. 654/1256),[64] *shaykhs* of the Kubrawiyya order and Avicennan philosopher and Shīʿī theologian, Naṣīr Ḍīn al-Tūṣī (d. 673/1274) and his disciple, Quṭb al-Dī n al-Shīrāzī (d. 710/1311). Qūnawī, having been initiated into the Suhrawardī order, spent around 15 years with Kirmānī, one of Ibn al-ʿArabī's close companions. Qūnawī used to say, "I have drunk milk from the breasts of two mothers," referring to both Ibn al-ʿArabī and Kirmānī.

The role of the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* as Ibn al-ʿArabī's decisive work and vehicle through which his ideas spread cannot be overemphasized. Because of its importance, Ibn al-ʿArabī found it necessary to write a condensed version of the *Fuṣūṣ* entitled *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* (Engraving of the *Fuṣūṣ*). In the *Fuṣūṣ* commentarial tradition, Qūnawī's *al-Fukūk fī asrār mustanadāt ḥikam al-Fuṣūṣ* (The Unravelling of the Mysteries Behind the Wisdoms of the *Fuṣūṣ*) is the first commentary after Ibn al-ʿArabī's own *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*.[65] The *Fukūk* is an explanation of the chapter headings of the *Fuṣūṣ* rather than an exhaustive commentary, a task that would be undertaken by his student Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī. Qūnawī describes Ibn al-ʿArabī's most celebrated work in the following:

> The *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* is one of the most precious distillations of our master's works … one of the seals of his writings and one of his last inspirations, flowing from the Muḥammadan station and wellspring of the Essence and comprehensive Singularity. It came from the quintessence of the spiritual taste (*dhawq*) of our Prophet—peace be upon him—with regard to knowledge of God, and intimates the origin of the tastes specific to the saints (*awliyāʾ*) and prophets mentioned therein, guiding each perceptive person to their quintessence … and the spiritual perfection of each.
>
> There is no doubt that an awareness of the mysteries contained in a book of this stature whose source of knowledge is that Prophetic station … is dependent upon realizing the spiritual inheritance of him who has tasted all of that, having opened and unveiled for him.[66]

The *Fukūk* was Qūnawī's last complete work, only to be followed by *Sharḥ al-aḥādīth al-arbaʿīniyya* (Commentary on Forty Hadiths), which contains a commentary on only twenty-nine hadith. Other works include *Iʿjāz al-bayān fī taʾwīl umm al-Qurʾān* (The Inimitability of Expression in the Hermeneutics of the Mother of the Qurʾān), *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ fī taḥqīq al-ṭawr al-makhṣūṣ* (The Treatise of Texts in the Verification of the Distinguished Degree) and *al-Risāla al-murshidīya* (The Epistle of Spiritual Guidance).

Among his earliest students was ʿAfīf al-Dīn al-Tilmisānī (d. 690/1291) who had the manuscript of the *Futūḥāt* recited to him by Qūnawī. Tilmisānī was also a student of Ibn al-ʿArabī and later became Qūnawī's closest companion after the Shaykh's death. He is the author of *Sharḥ asmāʾ al-ḥusnā* (Commentary on the Divine Names), commentaries on the *Fuṣūṣ* and ʿAbd al-Jabbār al-Niffarī (d. 350/961) classic, *Kitāb al-Mawāqif* (The Book of Standings).[67] He also wrote a commentary on ʿAbdallah Anṣārī's *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn* (The Stations of the Wayfarers), the consummate manual of spiritual wayfaring.[68] Both Tilmisānī and Kāshānī wrote commentaries on this work, attesting to the fact that the earliest circle of students was as immersed in spiritual wayfaring as they were in intellectual pursuits and philosophical expositions. Sufism is first and foremost a spiritual path, then an academic discipline that lends itself to philosophical meditations as evidenced by the writings of its founders. Contrasting Ibn al-ʿArabī with Qūnawī, Tilmisānī says, "My first *shaykh* was a philosophizing spiritualist (*mutarawḥin mutafalsif*) and my second was a spiritualizing philosopher (*faylasūf mutarawḥin*)."[69] Qūnawī's style was decidedly philosophical, reinforced by the fact that he held a philosophical correspondence with Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī, the foremost Peripatetic philosopher of the time and the reviver of Ibn Sīnā's works through his commentary on the *Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*.[70]

Qūnawī's circle also included Saʿad al-Din Farghānī[71] who attended his lectures on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem, *Tāʾiyyah* or *Naẓm al-sulūk* (Poem of the Way). ʿUmar b. al-Fāriḍ (d. 632/1235) was one of the greatest Sufi poets of the Arabic language. He was a contemporary of Ibn al-ʿArabī who lived in

Cairo. Chittick notes that Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Tāʾiyyah* and Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ* symbolize two tendencies within Sufism: the ecstatic and poetical and the philosophical and intellectual.[72] Farghānī was inspired to write a commentary on it in Persian entitled *Mashāriq al-darārī* (The Rising of Radiant Stars) to which Qūnawī wrote a foreword. Then he rewrote this work in Arabic as *Muntahā-l-madārik* (The Furthest Perceptions). Remarking on its prolegomenon (*muqaddima*),[73] Jāmī says, "It is the clearest treatise on esoteric science ever written."[74] The other important student is Persian poet Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIraqī, the author of *Lamaʿāt* (Divine Flashes), a sublime work of Persian literature inspired by Qūnawī's lectures and the subject of Jāmī's commentary *Ashiʾat al-lamaʿāt* (Rays from the *Flashes*).[75] ʿIraqī was also a devotee of Jalal al-Dīn Rūmī while in Konya, attending his music and poetry sessions, and about whom he said, "No one ever understood him as he should have been understood. He came into this world a stranger and left it a stranger!"[76]

Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī

Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī, the foremost of Qūnawī's students was the first to author a full-length commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. Born in the town of Jand in Khurasān, he departed his hometown to become a disciple of Qūnawī for a period of ten years. Jandī's brief autobiographical account shows the reverence with which he held his master and the types of spiritual exertions he performed on the path:

> Wherefore, having relinquished all my worldly ties, I crossed the sea with the intention of performing the pilgrimage, until finally God provided me with the companionship of Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn Muḥammad b. Isḥāq b. Yūsuf, who was the perfect man of his age, the pole of poles of the time, and the *khalīfa* of the seal of Muḥammadan sainthood. For ten years in his service, I spent most of my time in spiritual retreats, forty-day vigils and disciplines, until fibnally the true spiritual opening and the unequivocal good tidings were achieved through the blessed influence of the Shaykh – may God be pleased with him.[77]

After his master's death, Jandī went to Baghdad and assumed the role of his successor. Jandī wrote in both Arabic and Persian and eight of his works have survived. He claims to have received the meaning of the *Fuṣūṣ* from Qūnawī by way of instantaneous spiritual transmission, in the same way that Qūnawī had received it from Ibn al-ʿArabī.[78] He says:

> Shaykh Ṣadr al-Dīn – may God sanctify his secret – elucidated for me the opening (*khuṭba*) of the *Fuṣūṣ*, and while he was doing so the signs of an arrival from the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) appeared upon him, the effect of which then pervaded me both inwardly and outwardly … At that

> moment he exercised a mysterious influence within me, by virtue of his theurgy (*taṣarruf*), such that God thereby granted me an immediate understanding of all that is contained within the entire book, simply through this elucidation of the *khuṭba*. Realising that this was the case, the Shaykh told me that he too had asked his master – the author of the Fuṣūṣ, may God be pleased with him – to expound to him its secrets, and that while he was explaining to him the *khuṭba* he exerted a wondrous influence within him, by virtue of his theurgy, such that he thereby grasped all that the book contained.[79]

Jandī's commentary is replete with philosophical expositions and less concerned with explaining terminology, a task which would be undertaken by his illustrious student, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī. He also wrote *Nafḥat al-rūḥ wa tuḥfat al-futūḥ* (The Breeze of the Spirit and the Gift of Openings) on practical wayfaring.[80]

ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī[81]

ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, one of the most prolific scholars of this tradition, was a student of Jandī and teacher of Qayṣarī. Not much is known about his early life, although we do know that before meeting Jandī he studied with two Sufi masters, one of Twelver Shīʿa affiliation, ʿAbdallah al-ʿAlawī (d. 685/1285) and a Sunni Sufi of the Suhrawardiyya, ʿAbd al-Ṣamad Natanzī (d. 699/1299).[82]

He left an indelible imprint on the school Ibn al-ʿArabī with his *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya* (Sufi Terminology),[83] which he later expanded as *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām fī ishārāt ahl al-ilhām* (Subtleties of Nomenclature in the Allusions of the People of Inspiration). An essential contribution to the field of lexicography,[84] it defined technical terms of Sufism and systematized Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics. Ibn al-ʿArabī was the first to pen a work on Sufi terminology in his *Kitāb iṣṭilāḥ al-ṣūfiyya*.[85] Thereafter, Kāshānī wrote his work for "the scholars of the traditional and intellectual sciences [who] did not recognize" the technical terms of Sufism.[86] Morris notes that Kāshānī wrote on Sufism principally for mystically inclined intellectuals and scholars trained in the Avicennan philosophical tradition. By adopting a philosophical approach, Kāshānī made his dictionary an intellectual commentary on Sufi vocabulary for non-Sufis.[87] Following in Kāshānī's footsteps, ʿAlī b. Muḥammad Sharīf al-Jurjānī's (d. 816/1413) *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, was the most important work in this genre.

Kāshānī also wrote an important Sufi exegesis of the Qurʾān, *al-Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān*, published as *Tafsīr Ibn al-ʿArabī*. The salient aspect of this esoteric reading of the Qurʾān is the correspondence between the outward and the inward, or the signs on the "horizons" and in the "souls."[88] For every external reality in the macrocosm, there is a corresponding reality in the human microcosm. Kāshānī's concern with matters of wayfaring is evident in

his *Taʾwīlāt* but came to full fruition in his commentary on Anṣārī's *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*. This is because without wayfaring and attaining spiritual insight one will hardly grasp the realities being discussed. So long as they remain as concepts, they are veils for true understanding. He also composed a work on praxis and spiritual chivalry entitled *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān fī khaṣāʾiṣ al-fityān* (A Gift for the Brethren on the Characteristics of the Chivalrous).[89]

His commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, written thirty or forty years after Jandī's, owes much to Jandī and Qūnawī's commentaries, yet unlike his teacher's, this work emphasizes terminology. Thus, it is one of the most systematic, precise and foundational texts in the *Fuṣūṣ* commentarial tradition.

Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī

Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī's writings are some of the clearest and most precise expositions of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings and the school of philosophical Sufism. Qayṣarī was born in the central Anatolian town of Kayseri (Qayṣariyya), present-day Turkey, around 660/1260 and died in 751/1350. Qayṣarī's early education was in Kayseri and after having spent several years in Egypt, he returned to Asia Minor and studied at the Tokat-Niksar Niẓāmiyyah school under Muḥammad b. Sartak al-Marāghī, a student of Naṣīr al-Dīn Ṭūsī. He was proficient in Avicennan philosophy, having studied Hellenistic philosophy and mathematics. In Sufism, he was a disciple of ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī in Kāshān, with whom he studied *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, his spiritual preceptor on the path (*ṭarīqa*).[90]

Zayn al-Dīn Muḥammad ʿAbd al-Raʾūf al-Munāwī (d. 1031/1621) mentions him in his *Irghām awliyāʾ al-shayṭān bi dhikr manāqib awliyāʾ al-Raḥmān* as follows:

> [Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī was] the scholar given to religious devotion (*al-ʿālim al-ʿābid*), the ascetic Sufi who used to partake in spiritual struggle (*al-zāhid al-ṣūfī al-mujāhid*). He studied the religious disciplines in his hometown and then went to Egypt and studied the three religious disciplines with the scholars versed in them. He studied intensely and became accomplished in the intellectual disciplines (*wa baraʿa fī-l-funūn al-ʿaqliyya*). Then he occupied himself with Sufism, excelling in and mastering it and devoting himself to writing about it. He commented upon the *Fuṣūṣ* and attached an introduction to it in which he finely explains the principles of Sufism. Sulṭan Awrkhān b. ʿUthmān [Orkhān Ghāzī] built a religious school for him in the town of Iznik, which was the first one built in the Ottoman Empire. He died in the eighth century [AH].[91]

In 1336, Sultan Orkhān Ghāzī (d. 761/1360) appointed Qayṣarī to direct the first Ottoman school system, a post he served until his death in 1350.[92]

Because of this academic and political appointment, he was instrumental in the dissemination of Ibn al-ʿArabī's teachings throughout the Ottoman Empire. He also had an impact on the Ottoman scholar, Ḥamza Fanārī (d. 834/1431). In his *History of the Ottoman Empire*, Stanford Shaw notes, "The transition between the older Arab traditions and those developed under the Ottomans was provided by Davud-i Kayserī (d. 1350) and Molla Fanārī (d. 1431)."[93]

With respect to the *Fuṣūṣ* commentarial tradition, Qayṣarī's commentary, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, whose complete title is *Maṭlaʿ khuṣūṣ al-kilam fī sharḥ maʿānī fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*.[94] represents the third in a direct line going back to Ibn al-ʿArabī through Kāshānī, Jandī and Qūnawī, synthesizing the views of his predecessors. Chittick notes that Qayṣari's commentary seems to have been the most influential in the eastern lands of Islam from the fourteenth century onwards.[95] The late Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī (d. 1426/2005), a famous Iranian scholar of philosophy and mysticism wrote a lengthy commentary on the *Muqaddima* alone entitled *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. He writes in his introduction, "We have compared Qayṣarī's commentary with those of other commentators and found Qayṣarī's to be the best in many respects, even if Kāshānī's is more profound."[96] The highlight of this commentary is that the *Muqaddima* stands on its own as an independent work and has thus become the subject of careful study. If the *Futūḥāt* contains the entirety of Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics which is distilled in the *Fuṣūṣ*, then Qayṣarī's *Muqaddima* can be read not just as a précis of the *Fuṣūṣ* but as a summary of Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine. Āshtiyānī maintains that the *Muqaddima* is the best of Qayṣarī's writings.[97] For this reason, the *Muqaddima* has become a seminal text studied in the traditional learning centers as well as in private circles.

In the opening paragraph of the *Muqaddima*, Qayṣarī acknowledges that he experienced visionary states. He also relates that while he was studying the *Fuṣūṣ* with Kāshānī, he became the recipient of divine assistance. He says in the preface:

> God had granted me an understanding of meanings possessing brilliant luminosity and inspired me of significances containing lofty mysteries. He showed me in my inner secret a bearer of good tidings who would lead me to my gnosis of this book. I was singled out among my companions to have received knowledge and acquire meanings without prior reflection and learning. It was assistance from God, the Generous, and a grace from the merciful Lord because He affirms by His support whomever He wills from among His servants, forging success in the mystery of his origin and return.

On the importance of his role in the commentarial tradition, Tim Winter notes,

> Qayṣarī is significant in that he extends certain shifts in the exegetic treatment of Ibn al-ʿArabī. Qūnawī had already sought to present the Andalusian master as a systematic thinker, incorporating peripatetic and *kalām* discussions of ontology, and Qayṣarī continues this, attempting to use *kalām* vocabulary where he could, and devoting particular attention to unravelling difficult cruxes which might confuse readers or distract them from contemplating the overall coherence of the system.[98]

The Structure of This Study

An annotated translation of the *Muqaddima* has been published as a parallel Arabic–English text, *The Horizons of Being: The Metaphysics of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī*.[99] Even though it is an introductory text, it was written for a readership already well-versed in the philosophical and theological debates of the time. While the annotations attempt to define key terms and concepts of this school, the present work hopes to give a similar introduction to the subject in a more readable format, yet still addressing the main themes in Ibn al-ʿArabī's oeuvre. In fact, the present work was first conceived as a commentary on my translation of the *Muqaddima* and later reworked into an independent text. So, if the reader, while comparing the two works, encounters some repetition of material or quotes, it is because both were born out of the same project, and thus it was appropriate to include them in both places.

Pedagogically speaking, it is not uncommon to revisit a text like the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* multiple times with the assistance of various commentaries, since each successive pass reveals new insights and different shades of meaning. This is why each generation of scholars, beginning with Qūnawī, attempted to write a commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*, each work corresponding to new divine manifestations and personal insights. Qayṣarī's definition of Sufism is as follows:

> The subject of this discipline is the unitary Essence, eternal qualities, everlasting attributes, the emergence of multiplicity from God's unitary Essence and its return to the Essence. Furthermore, it discusses the manifestation of the divine names, the methodology of wayfaring of God's folk, their practices and disciplines, the outcome of their efforts, and the result of their actions. Thus, it can be said that the subject of this discipline is God, Almighty, and His relation to His creation.
>
> The principles of this discipline consist of the divine names and attributes. They can be divided into three types, names of the Essence, names of the Attributes and names of the Acts. The names of the Essence are those that refer to the Essence of God since their governance is comprehensive, such that other names are subsumed under them. The Attributes of Life, Knowledge, Power, Will, Light, Oneness, Necessity, and others, fall under this category.

> They are the names of the Essence because contemplating their unity with the Essence does not necessitate either contemplating the other names or creation. They refer to the degree of Singularity (*al-aḥadiyya*), which excludes any kind of multiplicity, and do not take into consideration their referents.
>
> Some of the names of the Essence possess individuation (*al-taʿayyun*) but are witnessed from behind a veil for the virtuous. While the foremost of the wayfarers and perfect gnostics witness them without any veils whatsoever. Some names of the Essence are not individuated and hidden in the Unseen, as mentioned by the Prophet, "O God, I ask you by the names which You have named Yourself, revealed in the Book and taught to Your servants, or have reserved for Yourself in the knowledge of the Unseen."[100]

Since this work is largely based on the *Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī* in sequence and content, it can be read as a commentary on its main themes. Besides the earliest masters mentioned above, this study will also invoke the writings of some key figures in the school of philosophical Sufism, particularly, Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī.

The first chapter discusses ontology: Being *qua* Being, privative and positive properties of Being, necessity, contingency and impossibility and the divine Being which the Sufis refer to as *al-Ḥaqq*. Since the doctrine of the "Oneness of Being" (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is attributed to the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī, this chapter discusses divine unity, the divine attributes, transcendence and immanence, and the universal degrees of Being.

The second chapter explores the divine names, their divisions, positive and privative attributes, the names of Beauty and Majesty, the Mothers of the Names, the Keys of the Unseen and the names of the Essence, Attributes and Acts, the engendering of the names, the universal and the particular, and their dominion, governance and relationship with creation. These first two chapters are foundational insofar as Being and its manifestations are the primary concerns for the school of philosophical Sufism.

Divine knowledge is among the first manifestations, which is the subject of the third chapter. This chapter investigates the essences in the divine knowledge called the Permanent Archetypes (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), the presence of the divine Essence in all things and the appearance of the macrocosmic levels of manifestation beginning with the First Intellect, the Pen and the Tablets.

The fourth chapter explores some shared concepts between philosophy and Sufism on the origin of multiplicity. It also defines some key terms of this school, such as Expansive Being (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*), the First Engenderer (*al-ṣādir al-awwal*), the Outstretched Parchment (*al-riqq al-manshūr*) and the Breath of the Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*).

The fifth chapter describes the five Universal Worlds or five divine Presences (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyya al-khams*), which refer to the principal degrees of Being. Ibn al-ʿArabī uses the term "presence" (*ḥaḍra*) to indicate that God is

present in every world. In this chapter we delve into one of the central concepts of his metaphysics, the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), the fifth and comprehensive degree that contains all of the divine names, representing the entirety of existence. This concords with the Qurʾānic concept of vicegerency about which God says, "I am going to place a vicegerent on the earth" (2:30).

As we move further down the hierarchy of Being, in the sixth chapter, we find that the Imaginal World (*al-ʿālam al-mithāl*) is an isthmus between the worlds of matter and Intellect and is the vastest of the worlds. This topic also concerns dreams, visions, spiritual intuition (*firāsa*), the Intermediary World (*barzakh*) and prepares the reader for the central topic on unveiling in the next chapter.

The seventh chapter investigates Sufi epistemology, unveiling and its types. Unveiling (*kashf*) technically signifies gaining awareness of that which is behind a curtain from among Unseen meanings and existential realities, through "finding" or witnessing, in meaning and in form.[101] This chapter describes the differences between unveiling and revelation, unveiling of form and unveiling of meaning, and those that are categorized in accordance with the theophany of the divine names to which they refer.

The eighth chapter revisits the topic of human vicegerency, namely, the relationship between the Great Man (*al-insān al-kabīr*), the Small Man (*al-insān al-ṣaghīr*), the Great World (*al-ʿālam al-kabīr*) and the Small World (*al-ʿālam al-ṣaghīr*) to denote the macrocosm and microcosm, respectively. The human being is the mirror of God, the comprehensive isthmus between God and the World, and the very book of existence. This is because the human reality has particular manifestations in the world and summarized manifestations in the human world. Thus, "He who knows himself, knows his Lord."[102]

The ninth chapter discusses the existential circle in greater detail, which connects the Arc of Ascent (*al-qaws al-ṣuʿūdī*) and the Arc of Descent (*al-qaws al-nuzūlī*). The highest point on the circle is the First Intellect or the Muḥammadan Reality and the lowest point is the corporeal human frame. Since the Muḥammadan Reality is the manifestation of the name *Allah*, its governance also extends in every realm and in every period, so it possesses lordship over every manifestation. Just as the name *Allah* lords over the rest of the divine names, the Muḥammadan Reality lords over the forms of the worlds. This chapter also discusses the Pole (*al-quṭb*), who is the axis of existence around whom the governance of the world revolves.

The tenth chapter discusses the microcosm which is the Supreme Spirit, the first individuation in existence, possessing all the perfections of the Essence in the form of the names and attributes. In Sufi terminology, it is the first manifestation of all realities on the plane of Unity, also referred to as the First Intellect, the Muḥammadan Reality, or the Muḥammadan Light and the Pen, as mentioned in various hadith, "The first thing that God created was my light,"[103] and "The first thing that God created was the

Intellect,"[104] and "The first thing that God created was my spirit."[105] This chapter gives one of the most compelling descriptions of the human spiritual constitution, defining the spirit (*rūḥ*), soul (*nafs*), heart (*qalb*), intellect (*ʿaql*), breast (*ṣadr*), inner heart (*fuʾād*), mystery (*sirr*) and hidden (*khafī*).

The eleventh chapter discusses the realities of prophethood and sainthood (*wilāya*). Sainthood is the inner aspect of prophethood since *wilāya* is a universal reality of the divine Essence, the source of manifestation and the origin of individuation. The contrary properties of the names of Beauty and Majesty give rise to the multiplicity that is present in every realm. The origin of conflict is the necessity of each divine name to seek the realization of its intrinsic properties, governance and period. Thus, the true prophet is the eternal Pole of existence that guides and brings all things to their ontological perfection.

The twelfth chapter describes the Day of Resurrection through the governance of some divine names over others. It is the Spirit's return, the true manifestation of divine unity and the removal of veils. Since all things possess form and meaning, or external form and inward reality, everything will appear in its true form. The Resurrection is thus characterized by the removal of the dense veil of corporeal matter, which is the lowest ontological realm.

Notes on Methodology and Translation

Philosophical Sufism has produced a vast and comprehensive body of work. William Chittick's bibliographies in *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*[106] and *The Self-disclosure of God*.[107] as well as studies found in the *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* attest to the voluminous scholarship on Ibn al-ʿArabī. Since it is impossible to encapsulate all the teachings in a single volume, this book introduces the foundational themes that one will encounter when reading Ibn al-ʿArabī and his commentators. Though the basis of the work is Qayṣarī's *Muqaddima*, I have introduced several other key figures to give a broader perspective and a sense of the commentarial tradition. One must see the commentators as the fruits of a single tree, or different lamps lit from a single flame. This is because it is first a spiritual tradition, then an intellectual one. The spiritual aspect transcends time and place, as one might become a disciple of a master in the spiritual realms but separated from him by several centuries. The major figures mentioned in this book were all great scholars, if not sages and saints, and for that reason alone, their works deserve to be studied.

Translated terms are consistent with those in my edition of the *Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī*. However, subtleties of the Arabic or Persian language are often lost in translation, becoming magnified when speaking about topics that are esoteric in nature, to which the Sufis refer as allusions (*ishārāt*), secrets (*asrār*) and realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*). According to the Sufis, mastering language must be accompanied by spiritual literacy, which is the language of

gnosis and the heart. Experiencing spiritual states or witnessing realities from the Unseen without understanding will hardly lead a person on the path to God. Spiritual literacy, therefore, is being able to read and understand the signs in existence and in the soul to safely move forward on the spiritual journey. For the Sufi, this occurs under the aegis of divine guidance, training from the *shaykh* and fraternity with companions, but most of all, reflecting upon God's signs. Though these are practical matters of wayfaring and the focus of this volume is theory, they are mentioned here because practice informs theory and understanding. Thus, the knowledge and practice of Sufism are like the two wings of a bird.

There are certain terms which, if understood, are keys to the whole discipline, such as *ẓuhūr*, which means manifestation and *tajallī* which means disclosure and display, as in the Qurʾānic verse, "By the Sun, and its brightness, and the moon when it follows it, and by the day when it reveals it" (91:1–3) and "When his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble" (7:143). The Arabic form of the word *yatajallā* denotes reflexivity and means self-disclosure.[108] The difference between *ẓuhūr* and *tajallī* is that the latter is a more immediate divine self-disclosure and *ẓuhūr* is a general and stable form of manifestation implicit in the structure of Being. The terms *maẓhar* and *majlā* are "nouns of place" and thus denote the "loci" of manifestation and divine self-disclosure. Because the locus and the One who manifests in it are distinct concepts theoretically but refer to a single thing in reality, the term *maẓhar* is translated as manifestation, in most cases, rather than as "locus of manifestation." I have translated *tajallī* as "theophany" throughout, as Chodkiewicz has done, although Chittick renders it as self-disclosure.

The term *tanazzul* refers to the descending degrees of divine manifestation. Related words are *inzāl* which indicates an instantaneous descent, and *tanzīl* which is gradual, particularly in the context of the Qurʾān's revelation. Manifestation is the key concept in Sufism, in the same way that causality is the key concept in science. For example, when Imam ʿAlī says, "God is in all things but not mixed within them," the rational mind cannot grasp such a statement that requires one to embrace both sides of a contradiction. The concept, however, can be explained through the term *tajallī*, where something reveals itself in something else, like a mirror reflecting an image without physically containing it. The image is simultaneously in the mirror and not in the mirror. One who contemplates this metaphor will be able to grasp the subtleties of Ibn al-ʿArabī's thought with respect to Being and its manifestations.

Thus, spiritual literacy at the highest level is reading the *majālī*, or self-disclosures of the divine names on the plane of the heart. The intellect then translates that into concepts and words, and through this interaction between the heart and intellect, one knows and understands. Thus, the true methodology in reading a Sufi text or *ʿirfān*[109] is the existential reading that occurs in the heart.

I have translated the term *taʿayyun* as individuation, not entification as Chittick and others have done. *Taʿayyun*, is derived from the Arabic word *ʿayn*, which can mean thing, entity, identity, essence, quiddity, eye, spring, spy and self. *Taʿayyun* is the particularization of the Essence in its descending degrees. In other words, the planes of Being are the successive particularizations and individuations of the Essence, even if the Essence *qua* Essence is absolute and undetermined. Thus, *taʿayyun* is any type of specification or individuation, not only that of entities. There is some debate concerning the correct translation of the term *al-aʿyān al-thābita*. Izutsu translates it as "Permanent Archetypes" and Chittick, in his earlier works, translated it as "immutable entities" then settled on the term "fixed entities." These are all closely related ideas, but the term *thābita* refers to the permanence of realities in the divine knowledge. I have used the word "entity" to denote a thing that is either existent, individuated or formed, even if it can mean essence and quiddity. Ibn al-ʿArabī says,

> The *aʿyān* are essentially characterized by non-existence (*ʿadam*). Surely they are permanently subsistent (*thābita*), but they are permanently subsistent only in a state of non-existence; they have not even smelled the fragrance of existence. Thus, they remain eternally in that state despite the multiplicity of the forms which they manifest in the existing things.[110]

Qayṣarī comments, "The *aʿyān al-thābita* are the forms of the divine names and that they are the realities of external entities. In the former, they are like bodies for spirits, and in the latter, they are like spirits for bodies."[111] Since the *aʿyān al-thābita* have a very specific signification in Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine, I have chosen the term "Archetype" to distinguish it from essence (*dhāt*), reality (*ḥaqīqa*) and entity (*mawjūd*). Nevertheless, finding the perfect translation of this term is a matter of semantics since its true nature, according to Qayṣarī, is fathomed only by those who have attained the highest level of unveiling, "One who witnesses the Permanent Archetypes on the plane of divine knowledge possesses the highest station of all."[112] Furthermore, "ultimate gnosis is the admission of inadequacy and deficiency, knowing that everything returns to Him and that He is the Omniscient, the Aware."[113]

Notes

1 The Prophet said, "In the body there is piece of flesh which, if it is sound, the entire body is sound, and if it is corrupt, the entire body is corrupt. Truly, it is the heart!" Muḥammad Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī*, ed. M.D. al-Bughā (Damascus, 1987), no. 52.

2 "A state (*ḥāl*) is that which enters upon the heart purely as a bestowal, without exertion or bringing it upon oneself, such as sorrow, fear, expansion, contraction, or tasting. It disappears when the attributes of the soul become manifest, whether or not it is followed by a similar state later. When it becomes

permanent and thus a disposition (*malaka*), then it is called a station (*maqām*)." ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya* (Cairo, 1992), 21.

3 "Unveiling is gaining awareness of matters concerning the Unseen and the verities of things that are customarily behind the veil." ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt* (Beirut, 2003), 151.

4 This triad was echoed by Ottoman scholar Ḥamza al-Fanārī (d. 834/1431), "The purpose of sharīʿa is to prepare Muslims for ṭarīqa, which in turn exists to lead them on to ḥaqīqa." Ḥamza Fanārī, *ʿAyn al-aʿyān tafsīr al-Fātiḥa* (Istanbul, 1908), 27, cited in Tim Winter, "Ibn Kemāl on Ibn al-ʿArabī's Hagiology" in *Sufism and Theology*, ed. A. Shihadeh (Edinburgh, 2007), 140.

5 It is narrated from the Prophet, "*Sharīʿa* is my word, *ṭarīqa* my actions and *ḥaqīqa* my states; gnosis my capital, intelligence the source of my religion, love my foundation, yearning my mount, fear my friend, forbearance my weapon, knowledge my companion, reliance [on God] my cloak, contentment my treasure, truthfulness my abode, certainty my shelter, and poverty my honor, which sets me above all other Prophets and messengers." Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Asrār al-sharīʿa wa anwār al-ṭarīqa*, ed. M. Bīdārfar (Qum, 2003), 21; Ibn Abī Jumhūr Aḥsāʾī, *ʿAwālī al-laʾālī*, ed. M. ʿIrāqī (Qum, 1985), 4:124.

6 Intellect according to the Sufis includes concepts such as the Supreme Spirit, The Muḥammadan Reality, the Pen and other concepts, referring to the hadith "The first thing God created was the Intellect." A discussion of the Intellect appears in various chapters of this book.

7 The term originates from the Greek word περιπατητικός (*peripatētikós*), which means "walking up and down."

8 See Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Oliver Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London, 1996); Seyyed Hossein Nasr and Amin Aminrazavi, *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia: From the School of Illumination to Philosophical Mysticism*, vol. 4 (London, 2012).

9 Sufism is also known by the term *ʿirfān* which is derived from the Arabic *maʿrifa*, denoting deep understanding or esoteric knowledge. The term *ʿirfān* relates to the knowledge of God and the perception of divine realities, and is more precise than the term Sufism, which is often associated with certain historical and cultural phenomena. The terms *maʿrifa* and *ʿārif* refer to esoteric knowledge or the gnosis of God, and the *ʿārif* (pl. *ʿurafā*) is the one who possesses *maʿrifa*. They are also referred to as God's folk (*ahl Allah*) and the Group (*ṭāʾifa*).

10 *Sunna* refers to the traditions and practices of the Prophet Muḥammad, whereas hadith refers to the verbally transmitted recorded teachings, deeds and sayings.

11 One of the most influential thinkers in Islamic history, Ghazālī brought Sufism into Sunni orthodoxy in his attempt to reconcile the esoteric and exoteric dimensions of Islam. He also leveled a major critique against Peripatetic philosophy in his *Tahāfut al-falāsifa* (The Incoherence of the Philosophers). His *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* (The Revival of the Sciences of Religion) still remains as the consummate work on ethics and religious life.

12 Fārābī was a philosopher, polymath and practicing Sufi who contributed to virtually every discipline of Islamic learning. Nasr writes, "He was a practising Sufi and the spirit of Sufism runs throughout his works. He was also one of the foremost medieval theoreticians of music and some of his musical works have survived in the rites of Sufi brotherhoods, especially those in Anatolia, until modern times." Nasr, *Science and Civilization in Islam* (Cambridge, 1987), 47.

13 See Shams Inati, *Ibn Sīnā and Mysticism* (London, 1996); Henry Corbin, *Avicenna and the Visionary Recital* (Princeton, 1960).

14 See Nadel El-Bizri, *Epistles of the Brethren of Purity: The Ikhwan al-Safa' and their Rasāʾil* (Oxford, 2008); Ian Netton, *Muslim Neoplatonists: An Introduction*

to the Thought of the Brethren of Purity (Ikhwān al-Ṣafāʾ) (London, 2002); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *An Introduction to Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Albany, 1993).

15 See Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī, *Ḥikmat al-ishrāq*, trans. J. Walbridge and H. Ziai, *The Philosophy of Illumination* (Provo, 1999).

16 He was later given the title *Ṣadr al-Mutaʾalliḥīn*, the "foremost of the theosophers."

17 See Ibrahim Kalin, "An Annotated Bibliography of the Works of Mullā Ṣadrā with a Brief Account of His Life," *Islamic Studies* 42/ 1 (2003): 21–62; Sayeh Meisami, *Mulla Sadra* (London, 2013); Ibrahim Kalin, *Mullā Ṣadrā* (Oxford, 2014); Mohammed Rustom, *The Triumph of Mercy: Philosophy and Scripture in Mulla Sadra* (Albany, 2012); Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and his Transcendent Theosophy* (Tehran, 1997).

18 Mullā Ṣadra's school, popularized by his student Mullā Hādī Sabzawarī (d. 1289/1873) is still the dominant school of philosophy in Iran today.

19 See Annemarie Schimmel, *Mystical Dimensions of Islam* (Chapel Hill, 1975); See William Chittick, "Sufism" in *The Cambridge Handbook of Western Mysticism and Esotericism* (New York, 2016), 83; Reynold Nicholson, "A Historical Enquiry Concerning the Origin and Development of Sufism with a List of Definitions of the Terms 'Sufi' and 'Taṣawwuf,' Arranged Chronologically," *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 38 (1906): 303–348.

20 See Ahmet Karamustafa, *Sufism: The Formative Period* (Edinburgh, 2007).

21 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. A. ʿAfīfī (Beirut, 1980), 125.

22 See William Chittick, "The School of Ibn al-ʿArabī" in *History of Islamic Philosophy*, eds. S.H. Nasr and O. Leaman (London, 1996); Caner Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture: From Mysticism to Philosophy* (London, 2016).

23 Mohammed Rustom, "Philosophical Sufism" in *The Routledge Companion to Islamic Philosophy* (New York, 2016), 400.

24 Chittick, "The School of Ibn al-ʿArabī," 510.

25 James Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi and his Interpreters Part I: Recent French Translations," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106/3 (1986): 539–551.

26 Chittick writes that initiatic chains that lead back to Ibn al-ʿArabī go through Qūnawī. See William Chittick, "'The Central Point': Qūnawī's role in the School of Ibn al-ʿArabī," *Journal of the Ibn ʿArabi Society* 35 (2004): 26.

27 See William Chittick, "Ibn al-ʿArabī and after in the Arabic and Persian lands and beyond," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition (Leiden, 1998) 9:317–324.

28 See Lloyd Ridgeon, *ʿAzīz Nasafī* (London, 1998), 5; Lloyd Ridgeon, *Persian Metaphysics and Mysticism: Selected Works of ʿAzīz Nasafī* (London, 2002).

29 For an English translation with Persian text and notes see E.H. Whinfield, *Gulshan i-rāz: The Mystic Rose Garden of Saʿd al-Dīn Maḥmud Shabistarī* (London, 1880).

30 See Leonard Lewisohn, *Beyond Faith and Infidelity: The Sufi Poetry and Teachings of Mahmud Shabistari* (London, 1995).

31 Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār wa manbaʿ al-anwār*, eds. H. Corbin and O. Yahya, in *La Philosphie Shiʿite* (Tehran, 1969).

32 Ḥaydar Āmulī, *al-Muqaddimāt min kitāb Naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, eds. H. Corbin and O. Yahia (Tehran, 1975).

33 Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Tafsīr muḥīṭ al-aʿẓam wa-l-baḥr al-khiḍam fī taʿwīl kitāb Allah al-ʿazīz al-muḥkam*, ed. M. Tabrizi (Qum, 2001.

34 See chapter two on "The Perfect Man" in Nicholson, *Studies in Islamic Mysticism* (Cambridge, 1921).

35 James Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi and His Interpreters Part II: Influences and Interpretations" in *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107/1 (1987): 108.

36 See Alan Godlas, "Molla Fanārī and the *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*: The Commentator and the Perfect Man" in *Uluslararası Molla Fenârî Sempozyumu: International Symposium on Molla Fanārī*, ed. T. Yucedogru et al. (Bursa, 2011), 31–46; Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture*, 139, n2.

37 William Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn ʿArabī's Foremost Disciple, Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī," *Sophia Perennis* 4/1 (1978): 43–58.

38 Seyyed Hossein Nasr, "Theoretical Gnosis and Doctrinal Sufism and Their Significance Today," *Transcendent Philosophy* VI (2005): 5.

39 In traditional learning circles, *Tamhīd al-qawāʿid* is studied after *Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī* but before *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*. After the *Fuṣūṣ*, one studies Qūnawī's *Miftāḥ al-ghayb* by way of Fanārī's commentary, *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, then finally Ibn al-ʿArabī's *al-Futūḥāt al-Makkiyya*.

40 See Lewisohn, "Sufism and Theology in the Confessions of Ṣāʾin al-Dīn b. Turka Iṣfahānī" in A. Shihadeh, *Sufism and Theology* (Edinburgh, 2007), 63.

41 The Chinese scholar P'o Na-Chi'h translated *Rays from the "Flashes"* (*Ashiʿʿat al-lamaʿāt*) into Chinese under the title *Chao-yüan pi-chüeh* [The mysterious secret of the original display]. Sachiko Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light* (Albany, 2000), 33.

42 Neo-Confucian thinker, Liú Zhì (d. 1739) translated into Chinese Jāmī's *Lawāʾiḥ*, which is a summary of Ibn ʿArabī's teachings. Liú Zhì incorporated other classic Sufi works such as Najm al-Dīn Razī's *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, ʿAzīz al-Dīn Nasafī's *Maqṣad-i aqṣā* and Jāmī's *Ashiʿʿat al-lamaʿāt*, which had already been translated before Liú Zhì penned his own translation of the *Lawāʾiḥ*. See Murata, *Chinese Gleams of Sufi Light*, 25. See also Sachiko Murata, *The First Islamic Classic in Chinese: Wang Daiyu's Real Commentary on the True Teaching* (Albany, 2017); Sachiko Murata, William Chittick, and Tu Weiming, *The Sage Learning of Liu Zhi: Islamic Thought in Confucian Terms* (Cambridge, 2008).

43 Sachiko Murata, "The Unity of Existence: Ibn 'Arabi and His School" held at Worcester College (Oxford, 2003).

44 Hamid Algar, "Jāmī and Ibn ʿArabī: *Khātam al-Shuʿarā'* and *Khātam al-Awliyāʾ*," *Ishraq: Islamic Philosophy Yearbook* 3 (2012): 150. See also Hamid Algar, *Jami* (New Delhi, 2014); Thibaut d'Hubert and Alexandre Papas, *Jāmī in Regional Contexts* (Leiden, 2018).

45 See Paul Wormser, "Placing Ḥamza Fanṣūrī in Context: The Early History of Malay Language and Literature" in *Jami in Regional Contexts*, 367–377.

46 William Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī and his School" in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations*, ed. S.H. Nasr (New York, 1997), 53.

47 Cited in Elizabeth Sirriyeh, *Sufi Visionary of Ottoman Damascus: ʿAbd al-Ghanī al-Nābulusī*, 1641–1731 (New York, 2005), 19. See also Samer Akkach, *ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi: Islam and the Enlightenment* (Oxford, 2007); Ahmad Sukkar, "ʿAbd al-Ghani al-Nabulusi of Damascus (d. 1143/1731), and the Mawlawi Sufi Tradition," *Mawlana Rumi Review* 5/1 (2014): 136–170.

48 The following studies trace the internal development of this school, focusing on its formative figures: Dagli's *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture*; See also parts I and II of Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi and His Interpreters," *Journal of the American Oriental Society*; Chittick, "Ibn ʿArabī and his School" in *Islamic Spirituality: Manifestations.*

49 See Claude Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulphur: The Life of Ibn al-ʿArabī*, trans. P. Kingsley (Cambridge, 1993).

50 A.A. Afifi, "Memorandum by Ibn ʿArabī of His Own Works," *Bulletin of the Faculty of Arts* (Alexandria University) 8 (1954): 109–117, cited in R.W.J. Austin, *Sufis of Andalusia: The "Rūḥ al-quds" and "al-Durrat al-fākhirah" of Ibn ʿArabī* (London, 1971), 48.

51 The preeminent Sufi author who wrote the encyclopedic manual of Sufi piety, *Qūt al-qulūb fī muʿāmalat al-maḥbūb wa waṣf ṭarīq al-murīd ilā maqām al-tawḥīd*

(Nourishment of the Hearts in Relations with the Beloved and a Description of the Path of the Aspirant to the Station of Divine Unity).

52 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Muḥāḍarāt al-abrār wa musāmarat al-akhyār* (Beirut, 2001), 7. See Addas, *Quest for the Red Sulfur*, 102, for details on Ibn al-ʿArabī's theological and philosophical training.

53 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt al-Makkiya* (Beirut, 1997), 1:70 (I 32.28). Throughout, I have given two references for the *Futūḥāt*. The first refers to the four-volume edition printed by Dār al-Turāth al-Islamiyya (Beirut, 1997). The second reference in parenthesis refers to the 1911 Bulaq edition, reprinted by Dār Ṣādir (Beirut, 1968), used by Chittick and others. Volume, page number and line number are given for the Bulaq edition.

54 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:512 (II 523.6).

55 For a study in English on the life and thought of Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī see Richard Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man: Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnāwī's Metaphysical Anthropology* (Leiden, 2014); See also Chittick, "Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī," *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, 2nd edition, 7:753–755.

56 Majd al-Dīn was *Shaykh al-Islam*, the highest religious authority in the Seljuk Sultanate.

57 Nasr and Aminrazavi, *An Anthology of Philosophy in Persia*, 4:414.

58 Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 16–17.

59 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt al-uns*, ed. M. Tawḥīdīpūr (Tehran, 1957), 556.

60 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān fī taʾwīl umm al-Qurʾān*, ed. J. Āshtiyānī (Qum, 2002), 18.

61 In the introduction to Ḥaydar Āmulī's *al-Muqaddama min kitāb naṣṣ al-nuṣūṣ*, Osman Yahya lists 195 commentaries from the 7th to the 11th centuries.

62 William Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: The al-Tūsī, al-Qūnawī Correspondence," *Religious Studies* 17 (1981): 87–104.

63 William Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Foremost Disciple and Some Notes on its Author," *Sophia Perennis* 4 (1978): 51. See William Chittick, "The Circle of Spiritual Ascent according to al-Qunawi" in *Neoplatonism and Islamic Thought* (Albany, 1992), 183.

64 A student of the founder of the Kubrawī Sufi order, Najm al-Dīn Kubrā (d. 618/1221), Rāzī wrote one of the most influential 13th-century texts on Sufism entitled *Mirṣād al-ʿibād min al-mabdaʾ ilā l-maʿād*, translated by Hamid Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen from Origin to Return* (Delmar, 1982). After the death of Kubrā, Rāzī became the disciple of Majd al-Dīn al-Baghdādī (d. 616/1219).

65 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī has written a commentary on this ten-page treatise entitled *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ fī sharḥ Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, eds. W. Chittick and J. Ashtiyānī (Tehran, 2001).

66 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, *al-Fukūk fī mustanadāt ḥikam al-Fuṣūṣ*, ed. M. Khwājavī (Tehran, 1992), 180.

67 See A.J. Arberry, *The Mawāqif and Mukhāṭabaāt of Muḥammad ibn ʿAbdi'l-Jabbār al-Niffarī* (London, 1935).

68 *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn* is a comprehensive spiritual manual that contains both theoretical aspects of Sufism as well as its practical dimension. It concisely describes each stage of progression that the wayfarer experiences towards attainment to God. Anṣārī organizes the text in ten sections, which are the mainstays of spiritual wayfaring, while each station subsumed therein is considered a branch. The ten sections begin with "preliminaries" (*al-bidāyāt*), followed by "doors" (*al-abwāb*), "interactions" (*al-muʿāmālāt*), "morals" (*al-akhlāq*), "roots" (*al-uṣūl*), "valleys" (*al-awdiya*), "states" (*al-aḥwāl*), "saintly attributes" (*al-wālāyāt*), "realities" (*al-ḥaqāʾiq*) and "ends" (*al-nihāyāt*). The stations were further divided into three degrees, that which pertained to the laypeople, the elect and the foremost of the elect.

69 Ibn Taymiyya, *Majmūʿat al-rasāʾil wa-l-masāʿil*, ed. M. Rashīd Riḍa (Beirut, 1983), 1:176, cited in Chittick, "The School of Ibn al-ʿArabī," 513.
70 See William Chittick, "Mysticism vs Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History: The al-Ṭūsī, al-Qūnawī Correspondence," *Religious Studies* 17/1 (1981): 87–104.
71 See William Chittick, "Spectrums of Islamic Thought: Saʿīd Al-Dīn Farḡhānī on the Implications of Oneness and Manyness," in L. Lewisohn, *The Heritage of Sufism* (Oxford, 1999), 2: 203–217.
72 See William Chittick, "The Last Will and Testament of Ibn ʿArabī's Foremost Disciple, Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī: Notes on Sadr al-Dīn Qūnawī," *Sophia Perennis* 4/1 (1978): 43–58.
73 Many of these larger works contain excellent prolegomena that are considered stand-alone treatises. The best example is Qayṣarī's *Muqaddima* to his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, which is the basis of this study.
74 Jāmī, *Nafaḥāt*, 588, cited in Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 20.
75 Fakhr al-Dīn ʿIrāqī, *Lamaʿāt*, ed. M. Khwājavī (Tehran, 1984), trans. W. Chittick and P. Wilson, *Fakhruddin ʿIraqi: Divine Flashes* (New York, 1982).
76 Badiʿ al-Zamān Furuzanfar, *Risala dar taḥqīq-i aḥwāl wa zindigani-yi Mawlana Jalaluddin Maḥmūd* (Tehran, 1954), 124, cited in Chittick and Wilson, *Fakhruddin ʿIraqi: Divine Flashes*, 43.
77 Muʾayyid al-Dīn Jandī, *Nafḥat al-rūḥ wa tuḥfat al-futūḥ*, ed. N. Hiravī (Tehran, 1983), 142, cited in Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 24.
78 Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture*, 95.
79 Muʾayyid al-Dīn al-Jandī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. J. Āshtiyānī (Qum, 2003), 18, cited in Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 25.
80 See Cyrus Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics: Beauty, Love and the Human Form in the Writings of Ibn ʿArabi and ʿIraqi* (Columbia, 2013), 22.
81 See Ismail Lala, *Knowing God: Ibn ʿArabī and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī's Metaphysics of the Divine* (Leiden, 2020); See also Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi and his Interpreters," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 106/3 (1986): 751.
82 Feras Hamza, Sajjad Rizvi and Toby Mayer, *An Anthology of Qurʾānic Commentaries* (Oxford, 2008), 1:38.
83 ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya* (Cairo, 1992).
84 Earliest Sufi dictionaries appeared as appendixes to Arabic treatises, Abū Naṣr Sarraj's (d. 378/988) *Kitāb al-Lumʿ fī-l-taṣawwuf* (Book of Glimmerings on Sufism), Rūzbihān Baqlī's (d. 606/1209) *Sharḥ-i Shaṭḥiyyāt* (Commentary on Ecstatic Sayings), Abū-l Qāsim al-Qushayrī's *Risāla* (Epistle), ʿAli Hujwīrī (d. 465/1072). See Carl Ernst, "Mystical Language and the Teaching Context in the Early Sufi Lexicons" in *Mysticism and Language*, ed. S.T. Katz (Oxford, 1992), 182.
85 See Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Kitāb iṣṭilāḥ al-Ṣūfiyya"* in *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī* (Beirut, 2001).
86 See Ernst, "Mystical Language and the Teaching Context in the Early Sufi Lexicons" 186.
87 James Morris, "Ibn ʿArabi and his Interpreters, Part II (Conclusion): Influences and Interpretations," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 107 (1987): 101–106.
88 Referring to the verse, "We will show them Our signs on the horizons and in their souls and until it becomes evident that He is the Truth (*annahu-l-ḥaqq*)" Qurʾān 41:53.
89 ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Tuḥfat al-ikhwān fī khaṣāʾiṣ al-fityān*, ed. M. Dāmādī (Tehran, 1972). *Futuwwa* is the noun derived from *fatā* (pl. *fityān*) literally means "young man." When it is used figuratively, it denotes a host of human virtues and noble character traits, particularly, honor, chivalry, courage, generosity, service, altruism and hospitality. Qushayrī says in his *Risāla*, "*Fatā* is the one who breaks idols … and the idol of each man is his ego." On the chapter on *Futuwwa* in his *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*, Kāshānī says, "*Futuwwa* is

a term for the station of a pure heart devoid of attributes of the self. That purity is the guidance augmented after faith."

90 ʿAbd-al-Ḥusayn Zarrīnkūb, *Donbāla-yi justujū dar taṣawwuf-i Īrān* (Tehran, 1990), 132.

91 ʿAbd al-Raʾūf Munāwī, *Irghām awliyāʾal-shayṭān bi dhikr manāqib awliyāʾ al-Raḥmān* (*al-Ṭabaqāt al-ṣughrā*), ed. M. al-Jādir, 4:284, cited in Mohammed Rustom, "Dāwūd Qayṣarī: Notes on his Life, Influence and Reflections on the Muḥammadan Reality" in *Journal of the Ibn al-ʿArabī Society*, 38 (2005): 52.

92 Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture*, 119.

93 Stanford Shaw, *History of the Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey* (Cambridge, 1976), 1:144.

94 Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, ed. Ḥ. Āmulī (Qum, 2002).

95 Chittick, "The School of Ibn al-ʿArabī," 518.

96 Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Qum, 2001), 56.

97 See *Sharḥ al-Qayṣarī ʿalā Tāʾiyat Ibn al-Fāriḍ*. For articles in English, see Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qunawi to al-Qayseri," *The Muslim World* 72 (1982): 107–128; Ibrahim Kalin, "Dāwūd al-Qayṣarī on Being as Truth and Reality" in *Knowledge is Light: Essays in Honor of Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. Z. Morris (Chicago, 1999); Turan Koç, "All-Comprehensiveness According to Daud al-Qayṣarī, and its Implications," *Journal of the Ibn al-ʿArabī Society* 27 (2000): 53–62; Akiro Matsumoto, "Unity of Ontology and Epistemology in Qayṣarī 's Philosophy" in *Consciousness and Reality: Studies in Memory of Toshihiko Izutsu*, ed. J. Āshtiyānī, H. Matsubara, T. Iwami and A. Matsumoto (Leiden, 1999), 367–386.

98 Winter, "Ibn Kemāl on Ibn al-ʿArabī's Hagiology," 138–139.

99 All references to Qayṣarī's *Muqaddima* are from the Arabic–English edition published as, Qayṣarī, Dāwūd b. Maḥmūd, and Mukhtar H. Ali, *The Horizons of Being: The Metaphysics of Ibn al-ʿArabī in the Muqaddimat al-Qayṣarī* (Leiden, 2020).

100 Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 99.

101 Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 193.

102 ʿAbd al-Wāḥid Āmidī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam wa durar al-kalim* (Tehran, 2000), no. 7946.

103 Muḥammad Bāqir Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār li-durar akhbār al-aʾimmat al-aṭhār* (Beirut, 1983), 1:97.

104 Muḥammad b. Yaʿqūb Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, ed. ʿA. al-Ghaffārī (Tehran, 1983), 1: no. 1; Muḥammad b. ʿAlī Ibn Babawayh al-Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl* (Beirut, 1995), 589, no. 13.

105 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 1:97, no. 7, 8.

106 William Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge: Ibn al-ʿArabī's Metaphysics of Imagination* (Albany, 1989).

107 William Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God: Principles of Ibn al-ʿArabī's Cosmology* (Albany, 1998).

108 See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *al-Tajalliyāt al-ilāhiyya* (Beirut, 2002).

109 Instead of Sufism, many modern authors have preferred to use the term *ʿirfān*, which is derived from the Arabic *maʿrifa*, denoting, deep understanding or esoteric knowledge, and the *ʿārif* (pl. *ʿurafā*) is the one who possesses *maʿrifa*.

110 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ ḥikam*, 63, cited in Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism: A Comparative Study of Key Philosophical Concepts* (Los Angeles, 1983), 161.

111 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 103.

112 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 169.

113 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 109.

1 Ontology

The timeless question of existence forms the basis of every other inquiry: What is the nature of Being and how do we come to know it?[1] The starting point is to study Being itself before investigating the existence of God, His attributes, creation, the human being, the macrocosm and the microcosm, and so on. We must first ask what Being is, in and of itself, and why it is necessary to examine it. Let us begin by answering the second question first. Pondering the nature of Being is not only the work of philosophers and metaphysicians, but intrinsic to every human. At one time or another, we all wish to know the meaning of existence and our place within it. One might ask, how did I come to be and where am I going? What is the purpose of life and is there something beyond it? These are all existential questions that we ask ourselves, consciously or not. The questions as well as the answers are already within us and come to light in moments of reflection or inspiration. The quest to know reality is built into the very fabric of our consciousness, it underlies our humanness and separates us from the animals.

Understanding the nature of Being will also help us understand specific existents, such as language or music, or love and justice, or any other material or abstract reality. But knowledge of general Being is prior and more valuable than the knowledge of specific existents as the late philosopher Jalāl al-Dīn Āshtiyānī explains:

> The nobility and value of any discipline is in proportion to its comprehensiveness. Any discipline that sets the foundation and principles of another is considered more valuable and nobler, since the subject of the lesser discipline is based on the principles and arguments set forth in the higher. That is why philosophy, which discusses the very nature of existence, is considered a nobler discipline than mathematics, which discusses quantities, which are essential accidents of existence. Similarly, the science of music is considered dependent and subsidiary to the science of mathematics.[2]

This type of classification of knowledge is foundational in both scholastic and spiritual traditions.[3]

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Since the subject of Being forms the basis of every other discipline, philosophical Sufism is grounded in an ontology that also encompasses the fundamental issues concerning divine unity, God's attributes and His relation to the world. Because the ontology of mysticism is not clearly understood, Sufi doctrines are often misrepresented as people fail to grasp complex ideas such as divine manifestations, unity within multiplicity or the concept of attainment and annihilation. Indeed, without understanding the very nature of Being, it is not possible to probe into secondary matters such as the existence of the soul and its perfection, God's immanence and transcendence and eschatological matters. Philosophical Sufism also describes the manifestation of the divine names as it relates to the methodology and practices of wayfaring of the people of God. Thus, understanding God and His attributes is a prerequisite for understanding the method of wayfaring and its corollaries.

Let us now turn our attention to pure Being, without reference to the existence of something else. When viewed in this way, it is called absolute existence, or Being qua Being. It does not refer to creation, the universe or mental existence but Being, in and of itself. Qayṣarī writes:

> Know that Being qua Being is neither external existence nor mental, since each one is a type of existence. Being itself is not conditioned nor is it restricted by either absoluteness or restriction. It is neither a universal nor a particular, nor categorized by generality or particularity. It is one, but not with a oneness superadded to its Essence, nor a multiplicity […]
>
> Being has neither contrary nor like. Since contrary and like are two existents that are either opposed to each other or are equal to each other. Being, on the other hand, is different from all realities, because the existence of their opposite and the realization of their like is utterly separate from it […]
>
> There is nothing intermediate between Being and non-being, just as there is absolutely nothing intermediate between an existent thing and a non-existent thing.[4]

Being and Reality (*al-ḥaqq*)

For the Sufis, the concept of Being (*wujūd*) is inseparable from God. They use the term, *al-ḥaqq*, which means truth and reality and is also one of God's attributes. Philosophically, it is more convenient to speak about God as the absolute Being (*wujūd*) and the ultimate Reality (*al-ḥaqq*) or the Real. This is because the name *Allah*.[5] the proper name for God in Arabic, has religious connotations, especially in the context of Abrahamic monotheism. When we apply greater philosophical rigor, we come to understand that Being is a more universal concept than traditional notions about God.[6] It enables us to speak philosophically about the nature of existence, divinity, creation, time, the human being and God's relation to the world.

The term *wujūd* comes from the Arabic root letters *w-j-d* which denotes both "existing" and "finding." This double meaning is significant since existence is something that is to be found, or that which if found, exists. The Arabic word conveniently links the complementary disciplines of ontology and epistemology, since one who seeks God is seeking His Being, and thus the seeker's knowing is his becoming. In other words, true knowledge, or "finding," is the transformation of the self in "being."

The term *al-ḥaqq* reflects a particular orientation, and this is the aspect of reality and truth.[7] There are numerous meanings of the term *al-ḥaqq* that includes truth, reality, fact, rightness, the established, the necessary; its opposite is falsehood. Since it is one of the epithets of God, it expresses that He is the sole reality, the truth, the established, the necessary, and one whose existence and reality are proven to be true.[8] It also refers to absolute Being,[9] the divine Essence,[10] or that through which all things are known, so one who obtains awareness of God distinguishes between the real, and the false and illusory.

The Prophet was asked from which thing did he come to know God. He replied, "I came to know God by God and I came to know things *through* God,"[11] or as Imam ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib (d. 40/661) said, "I did not come to know God through the Prophet, but I came to know the Prophet through God."[12] One does not know God through the contingent, since things are known through likes and opposites. Since God does not have a like or opposite, He cannot be known through them.

The real opposes the illusory and truth opposes falsehood. Since God is the real, the established and the necessary, the Sufis have used the term *al-ḥaqq* to prevent any attribution of contingency to the Necessary Being, who is the sole reality. Furthermore, since *al-ḥaqq*, refers to Being, when the Sufi perceives the realities of existence, he has discovered God in those aspects.

Privative Properties of Being

Privative properties are negative propositions that cannot be posited about Being. When we conceptualize Being unconditionally, it is neither external existence nor mental, since both of these types of existence are the manifestations of Being. External existence is in contrast to mental existence, although in another sense, it is a general category that includes mental existence since it occurs in the mind of the perceiver. It is different from external existence in the specific sense since it does not possess the effects of the latter. For example, a person may conceive of the concept of fire without experiencing some of its effects such as heat.

Furthermore, we cannot apply the condition of absoluteness or restriction to Being qua Being because both absoluteness and restriction are conditions. In theological terms, Being qua Being is the unknowable Essence of God, and that which is unknowable cannot be defined. Imām ʿAlī describes God in light of this transcendence:[13]

> He who places conditions on Him does not posit His oneness, he who likens Him does not grasp His reality, he who compares Him is not referring to Him, he who indicates and imagines Him does not posit His perfection.[14]
>
> Whoever ascribes an attribute to God, the Glorified, has associated Him [with another], and whoever associates Him [with another], has regarded Him as two, and whoever regards Him as two has divided Him, and whoever divides Him has misunderstood Him; and whoever misunderstands Him has indicated Him; and whoever indicates Him has posited limitations for Him; and whoever posits limitations for Him has numbered Him; and whoever asks "What is He in?" considered Him contained, and whoever asks "What is He upon?" deems Him isolated.[15]

As mentioned, this is referring to the divine Essence, which is beyond the limitation of attributes and conditions. Being transcends and precedes the existence of its own manifestations, as the Prophet said, "God was, and nothing else was with Him."[16] However, according to scripture, we do know that God possesses attributes.[17] These attributes, as we will see in the next chapter, are not superadded to the divine Essence, since knowledge, power, life, and other attributes are not distinct realities from the reality of the Essence.

Essential Being has neither attachment, individuation nor name. Universality or particularity cannot be applied to Being qua Being but only to its manifestations. Only when Being is manifested does it become external, mental, universal or particular, unitary or multiple, in accordance with the respective plane of manifestation. Being qua Being is independent of all manifestations whereas the divine names necessitate their loci in order to become manifest. For example, if it were not for the things upon which divine power could be exercised, the attribute of power would be meaningless. The same is true for other attributes that derive their meaning from their referents. We will return to this point in the next chapter.

Philosophers distinguish between Being and quiddity (*māhiyya*). Quiddity refers to the essence or defining aspect of a thing.[18] The mind distinguishes between the existence of a thing and its essence, that is, its actual existence, the defining features extrapolated from its actual existence. What is real is its existence while its quiddity is its defining limits or the shape of its existence. It is important to note that what is real is existence and not quiddity, since the defining limit of a thing is the negative predication of a thing, or what it is *not*. Because the mind acknowledges reality through quiddities, it perceives the "tree" rather than the *existence* of the tree. In fact, what is real is the existence of a thing whose quiddity is "tree-ness." This view is a reiteration of the Peripatetic view of the fundamentality of existence, which is echoed in Mullā Ṣadrā's concept of the primacy of Being (*aṣālat al-wujūd*).[19] Āshtiyānī citing *Sharḥ al-hidāya* of Ṣadrā says:

> The Sufis, among the monotheists, are of the view that there is nothing in existence except the Real Being and the world is only the theophany, manifestation and individuation of Being. They see nothing in existence except God and His manifestations, and they do not view the manifestations as an independent reality.[20]

Being is not a concept (*iʿtibārī*), since anything that exists in the mind through mental existence is dependent on the thinker. This would imply that either the mind precedes Being or is the cause of it. Being is not an abstraction because it has extension in the external world. In fact, both mental and external things are due to Being and therefore can neither precede Being nor be the cause of it.[21] The pervasiveness of Being even gives rise to the *idea* of non-being, a concept that has no external referent, existing only in the mind.

One of the proofs that absolute Being is singular is that its contrary, absolute non-being, is also singular. Relative non-being may be multiple, since it is the non-existence of a particular entity, such as the non-existence of the sight when speaking of a blind person. Relative non-being is different from conditioned non-being, conditioned by time, for example.

Positive Properties of Being

There are several propositions we can make about the reality of Being. For example, Qayṣarī says, "Being is a unitary reality in which there is no multiplicity … His [reality] is not a oneness that contrasts with multiplicity, but is the origin of the unity that contrasts with [multiplicity]."[22] Multiplicity arises through the manifestation of Being which is unitary on the level of the Essence but multiple with respect to the forms of its manifestation. The Qurʾān alludes to this in the verse, "Every day He is in a [new] state [of being]" (55:29), which means that God is in perpetually new forms of manifestations. When Being manifests in a particular form, it is called individuation (*taʿayyun*).[23] *Taʿayyun*, is derived from the Arabic word *ʿayn*, which can mean thing, entity, identity, essence, archetype and quiddity. *Taʿayyun* is the particularization of the Essence in its descending degrees. In other words, the planes of Being are the successive particularizations and individuations of the Essence, even if the Essence qua Essence is absolute and undetermined. Thus, *taʿayyun* is any type of specification or individuation, not only that of entities.

Despite its own manifestations, Being possesses a oneness that is not in opposition to multiplicity. In the same way that a single ray of light produces multiple colors when diffracted through a prism, singular Being produces multiple manifestations in the prism of existence. This is why the gnostic sees God in everything, or from another perspective, sees nothing but God. Imām ʿAlī said, "I did not see anything except that I saw God in it, before it and behind it."[24] Therefore, these manifestations are not superadded to Being, rather they originate in Being and are one with it. Being is

qualified by multiple designations, all of which refer to the same reality. Because there is no multiplicity in Being qua Being, it is the most universal of all things, as Qayṣarī says: "It is the most universal of all things because of its universal prevalence and embracing of quiddities, even to the extent that it presents the ideas of 'absolute' and 'relative' non-being when contemplated in the mind."[25]

Since Being is more general and manifest than the entities that appear through it, its realization is self-evident but unknown with respect to its Essence and quiddity. This is because things are known through their quiddities and distinctions, while Being is without delimitation; its "quiddity"[26] is without condition and distinction. Since all things subsist through Being, Being cannot be hidden. At the same time, quiddities are limited and contingent, so nothing in existence can identify the true nature of Being itself. Ṣadrā says:

> The reality of Being is the most manifest of all things through presence and unveiling, and its quiddity is the most hidden among things conceptually and in its inner reality. Of all things, its concept is the least in need of definition on account of its visibility and clarity, and on account of its being the most general among all concepts in its comprehensiveness.[27]

Being qua Being is simple and does not accept division and partition. It is not composed of parts such as matter and form, since matter and form are both types of Being. If Being were composed of something it needs for its own existence, then it would precede itself since the composite parts would precede Being. Furthermore, quantity cannot be applied to Being since it is an accidental quality of bodies, which also necessitates Being for its existence. Being is not composed of mental attributes such as genus and differentia since both are by definition limitations of existence and require Being for their realization. Since Being pervades all things, it has neither limit nor definition and thus cannot be composed of genus and differentia.[28] Qayṣarī writes: "Through Being, contraries are realized, and likes are sustained. Indeed, it is Being that manifests itself in the form of contraries and other forms, necessitating the joining of both sides of a contradiction."[29]

Being is unitary without distinction and differentiation and contraries that appear externally are its manifestations in accordance with the existential capacity. For example, the quiddity of "whiteness" is other than the quiddity of "blackness" but both are manifestations of Being. The distinction is due to the limitations of their material existence.

Since Being and non-being are exhaustive categories, there is nothing intermediate between Being and non-being, just as there is no intermediate between an existent thing and a non-existent thing. However, the philosophers claim that quiddities occupy an intermediate position between the two, in the sense that quiddity, by definition, does not presuppose either the

existence or non-existence of a thing. The quiddity of a tree does not preponderate between its existence or non-existence. What exists is the concept in the mind not the thing itself. Externally, there is only Being, not the quiddity itself. Thus, the multiplicity that arises from likes and contraries are quiddities that are realized through the unitary reality of Being.

The material world is the furthest manifestation of pure Being; thus, it is qualified by extreme multiplicity. Only a single form can be impressed on material bodies at any one time, unlike immaterial, spiritual substances that simultaneously embrace contrary qualities. The immaterial soul, for example, possesses diverse and contrary properties because it is not confined by materiality. Multiplicity converges into unity in the ascending degrees of Being, becoming more comprehensive and less differentiated. Similarly, we can posit two types of unity for Being, a singularity which is not in contrast to multiplicity and a unity that embraces multiplicity.

Other positive propositions about Being are expressed in the following passage, where we see Qayṣarī describing certain qualities that apply specifically to God. In this passage, Qayṣarī shifts the emphasis from the philosophical term, Being to the theological term, God. As mentioned, Being and God in this tradition are used interchangeably:

> [God] is absolute good and everything that is good is from Him, by means of Him, and subsists through His Essence and for His Essence since He is not in need of anything other than Himself for His realization, for He is subsistent and established by Himself and establishes all others.
>
> He has no beginning, otherwise it would be in need of an existing cause for its coming into being, for He would be contingent. He has no end, otherwise, He would be subject to non-being and thus described by its opposite, or undergo inversion.[30] He is pre-eternal and everlasting, "the First, the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden" (57:3) because all that is manifest in the Visible or hidden in the Unseen returns to it.
>
> He is Omniscient with respect to all things because He encompasses all things by His Essence. The acquisition of knowledge by [any other] knower takes place through Him, so He is more entitled to it.
>
> In fact, all perfections are necessary for Him and all attributes are established by Him, such as life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, vision, and so on, for He is the Living, the Knower, the One who wills, the Powerful, the Hearing, the Seeing, by His own Essence not by means of anything else. Since, through Him, all things are attached to their perfections. Moreover, He is the one who manifests through His theophanies and transforms in various forms of those perfections.[31]

Theologically speaking, God is absolute good, and every good that appears in existence is from Him and subsists through Him. The good, in this sense, is ontological and not ethical; existence is a form of good and non-being is a

form of "evil." This conception of the good, however, extends to the ethical dimension, since every virtue that the soul acquires is a form of the good, and thereby moves towards an ontological perfection. Conversely, every evil is a deficiency in acquiring a certain perfection. In the philosophical sense, evil is non-being while good is the soul's expansion.

Being qua Being is neither preceded nor followed by non-being, and it exists neither through a cause nor is it transformed into non-being. Transformation of Being into non-being is impossible, because by definition, Being is the contrary of non-being. Being cannot remain itself and at the same time transform into non-being.

The Sufis also describe Being as light, based on the Qurʾānic verse, "God is the light of the heavens and the earth" (24:35). Qayṣarī explains that Being becomes manifests through its own luminosity:

> Being is pure light, since all things are perceived through it. It is manifest by itself and through it, things are made manifest. Being is the light of the unseen heavens, the spirits, the earthly bodies and forms, because all of these are realized and exist through it. It is the source of all spiritual and corporeal lights.[32]

Being is both spiritual and material light. It illuminates the "heavens" of the unseen, the spirits of the immaterial and intellectual worlds. These worlds are luminous in essence though their light is a ray of divine light. The "earth" of material bodies refers to corporeal existence, which is the earth in relation to the unseen world. Thus, being is the source of all spiritual and corporeal light, which also refers to the inward spiritual realities and sensory objects, respectively. Although Being is light and illuminates all others, its Essence is known only by itself; thus, only God knows Himself.

Necessity, Contingency and Impossibility

Applying cosmological arguments used by the Peripatetic philosophers, Qayṣarī argues that "Being is necessary-in-itself, for if it were contingent, then it would require an engendering cause, resulting in a thing preceding itself."[33] According to Ibn Sīnā, the "Necessary Being" (*wājib al-wujūd*) is that existent which is inconceivable to be non-existent. The contingent being (*mumkin al-wujūd*) is that which is conceivable to be existent or non-existent. The necessary existent is that whose existence is necessary. The contingent existent does not have necessity in either its being or non-being. The "contingent existent" means that which exists in potentiality.[34] Qayṣarī defines it in the following:

> The *necessary* is the necessity of self-existence intrinsic to the Essence and its realization externally. The *impossible* is the necessity of non-existence externally. The *contingent* is the absence of necessity towards either existence or non-existence.

> Both the contingent and the impossible are privative attributes in that they predicate negatively of their subjects in external existence, whereas necessity is a positive attribute.[35]

Since Being is necessary-in-itself, it exists by the necessity that is found in its own essence and not by an external cause. Since a thing can either be necessary-in-itself (*wājib bi-dhātihi*), necessary-through-another (*wājib bi-l-ghayr*), contingent (*mumkin*) or impossible (*mumtani'*), Being qua Being does not require a cause to be realized, and the contingent requires a cause either in the external world, or in the mind of the perceiver. If it is argued that the contingent does not require a cause if it is not realized externally (remaining, as it were, in the mind), then Being can be considered a similar type of contingent that does not require a cause. However, since the premise "the contingent does not require a cause" is false, the conclusion "Being is contingent" is also false.

Qayṣarī argues that everything that is contingent is either substance or accident and Being is neither substance nor accident. Therefore, Being is not contingent, but established as necessary. He says:

> Being is not a substance, because [a substance] is an external entity that does not [inhere] in a locus, or a quiddity, which were it to exist, would not exist in a locus. This is not the case for Being, otherwise it would be like specific substances, which need Being and its requisites for its realization. Nor is it an accident, because it is defined as an entity that [inheres] in a locus, or a quiddity, which were it to exist, would exist in a locus. Being is not an entity in the sense that it has a being superadded to it, let alone inhere in a locus, but its existence is essential and established by itself and not by something separate from it, mentally or externally.[36]

Necessity is intrinsic to Being but accidental with respect to quiddities that are in need of Being for their realization in the external world. Necessity can apply to the contingent with respect to causality, for example, because a cause must precede its effect. There is a conceptual distinction between the necessity in relation to the contingent and that which is intrinsic to Being, in the same way that knowledge, knower and the known are distinct in the mind, but united in reality. This is because all things are in need of Being for their realization, whereas Being is realized through itself and is realization itself.

Some philosophers hold that Being qua Being is a natural universal (*al-kullī al-ṭabī'ī*)[37] and every natural universal acquires existence only through one of its individuals. Therefore, Being qua Being would not be necessary since it would require an individual to be realized.[38] If Being qua Being is a natural universal, which is only realized in the external world through its individuals, then Being would also need to be realized through individuation, and therefore, cannot be necessary. However, the nature of Being is not like the nature

of quiddities since its needs nothing other than itself for its realization, as the hadith reports, "There was God and nothing else was with Him."[39] All realization is the manifestation of Being and Being does not depend on its own manifestation.

The forms of contingent entities follow their essences, but essences also depend on the entities so that they may be realized through them. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes, "The gnostic sees that causes are also caused by their effects, because the cause remains in a state of non-being without the realization of its effect."[40] In this way, there is a mutual necessitation between cause and effect. Likewise, the lower degrees of existence follow the higher ones, while at the same time the higher degrees depend on the lower ones to become manifest.

According to Qayṣarī, the contingent does not go out existence because "the existence of the contingent is its occurrence externally and its manifestation, which is one of the accidents of real Being, that returns to Being—in one aspect—upon the removal of relations, not [the removal of Being] itself."[41] In other words, when entities leave existence in the external world it is not because Being is affected with non-being. Rather, they return to the Unseen through the Hidden. "In reality, the contingent also does not cease to exist but disappears and enters the Unseen from where it had emerged."[42] He says, "When non-existence is applied to contingent entities it is the removal of the state of existence from its quiddity. That is why it is not permissible to say, 'contingent existence is capable of accepting non-being' except metaphorically."[43] Non-being does not possess anything that could be imposed upon quiddity. Furthermore, existence of a quiddity cannot accept non-being since this would transform Being into non-being, which is impossible, since a thing cannot simultaneously be itself and its contrary.

In the following sections, we will see that these essences and quiddities are obliterated at the highest divine degree, the exclusive Singularity, which has neither form nor trace, not even the divine names. The objects of existence first appear at the presence of Unity in the form of the divine names and then descend stage after stage throughout the various realms of existence.

Gradation in Being

A group of Peripatetic philosophers held that Being universally applies to both the Necessary and the contingent as a graded reality. Ṭūsī writes, "Existence is a concept that is applied to the Necessary and the contingent through gradation (*tashkīk*)."[44] However, Qūnawī, Kāshānī and Qayṣarī refute gradation in the essential reality of Being, since this would undermine the foundation of the essential oneness of Being.[45] Since Being does not have individuation independent of its own reality, only its individuations possess a gradation of intensity and weakness on the plane of quiddities. Qayṣarī says: "If what they mean [by gradation] is that priority or posteriority, primacy or lack thereof, intensity or weakness applies to Being qua Being, this is

inadmissible since these are all relative qualities that are conceived only in relation to one another."[46]

Gradation is divided into various types: The first type, the Peripatetic view, is general gradation where entities are independent realities, and similarity between two things is not in the same aspect. The second type of gradation is more specific and posits that Being is a graded reality, differing in weakness and intensity, and distinct in the same aspect. Just as light is a single reality, the aspect of distinction is the very same aspect of similarity, namely, the quality of light. That is, both weak and strong light share in the quality of luminosity, while at the same time differing in that very quality.

The Sufis posit a more specific definition of gradation, namely, that Being is a single reality differing in the intensity and weakness of manifestation, since gradation implies distinction within independent degrees of Being. Since Being is a single reality, it is not possible to speak of independent degrees of its essential reality. Therefore, differentiation is due to its manifestation in various forms. The Sufi, therefore, does not accept the terms individuations, extensions (*maṣādīq*) or degrees of Being in the same sense as the philosophers. They hold that the terms are valid only when referring to the manifestations of Being.

For them, there is no gradation in the essential reality of Being and gradation applies to the levels of existence given that it is the source of multiplicity.[47] Gradation and distinction in Being arise from the manifestation and the pervasiveness of its reality, not its essential nature, since Being pervades all things and is not separate from it, either from the point of view of its Essence or names. In the same way that Essential Being embraces the myriad quiddities without undergoing any change or distinction in its Essence, gradation in existence is not superadded to the Essence. It is both one with the Essence insofar as the Essence embraces all things, and distinct from it insofar as nothing encompasses it.

The school of philosophical Sufism holds that Being is unitary and without differentiation with respect to the Essence but graded with respect to its manifestations. Every plane of existence that reaches the first individuation, or the exclusive Singularity, subsumes all that is below it. Every higher plane is more comprehensive, simple and luminous than those below it. That is why true multiplicity exists in the material world, the lowest plane, but is used metaphorically with respect to the names and attributes due to their proximity to the Essence. Qayṣarī writes:

> This is precisely the view of God's folk, since they hold that as Being descends in the degrees of existence, it becomes manifest in the enclosures of contingency, and the multiplicity of intermediaries—its hiddenness intensifies, its manifestations and perfections weaken.[48]

Being, with respect to its descending degrees of manifestation on the plane of contingency, and the multiplicity of its theophany, becomes farther removed

from absoluteness, and is therefore described as intense or weak. The greater the intermediaries of contingency, the more hidden is the essential reality of Being, and the weaker the manifestation of its absoluteness. The closer the manifestation to the degree of Singularity, the more complete is its manifestation. Qayṣarī asserts that gradation is conceptual:

> Being has manifestations in the intellect, just as it has external manifestations. Among them are general affairs and universals that do not have existence except in the intellect. The ascription of Being to individuals related to quiddities through gradation is in light of intellectual manifestation. For that reason, it is said that [gradation] is conceptual (*iʿtibārī*), and Being qua Being cannot be described by [individuals] through gradation, but only as a rationally predicated universal.[49]

The manifestations of Being both in the external world and intellectual realm is identical with their loci of manifestation. The external world is not a vessel for Being's manifestations. Rather, Being is identical with the external world, in the same way that the breath of a person is identical with his speech in the external world since words are engendered simultaneously by and with the breath. Thus, gradation is conceptual and Being, in actuality, is a single reality.

Transcendence and Immanence

God's relationship to His creation is reflected in the transcendence and immanence duality, an overarching theme in philosophical Sufism. Transcendence indicates that the essential reality of Being is unattainable and unknowable, while immanence indicates that God can be known through His manifestations, as they are none other than Himself. Being at the degree of the Essence and Ipseity (*huwiyya*)[50] is unknown to everything but itself, because "He is independent of the worlds" (3:97) and "There is nothing like Him" (42:11). Explaining the reason for Being's unknowability, the prominent Iranian philosopher Jawādī Āmulī says:

> God's invisibility is due to the intensity of His manifestation, and His remoteness is because of His extreme proximity. If an entity's manifestation is more evident than knowledge, knower and the known, and if it is nearer than the thing is to itself, then such intense manifestation necessarily creates invisibility, and such extreme proximity creates distance.[51]

Remarking on God's invisibility, Qayṣarī states that Being is a self-evident reality whose innermost aspect is hidden:

> None knows the reality of Being but Being itself. Being is neither the cosmos (*kawn*), nor occurrence (*thubūt*), nor realization (*taḥaqquq*), since

> it is more general and comprehensive than each. Each is an expression of Being's individuation, not Being qua Being. Although the knowledge of Being is self-evident, the reality of the essence of Being cannot be known.[52]

Since Being encompasses existence, it can neither be known nor defined. Its reality is inaccessible, which is why the Prophet said, "We have not known You as You have deserved to be known."[53] In short, the limited cannot know the Absolute. Whatever can be known of it is due to one of its manifestations, and the aspect of similarity (*tashbīh*), while the unknowability of its Essence is due to the aspect of its transcendence (*tanzīh*). Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "Transcendence is that God is described as not having the attributes of the originated, and that it is a privative description, for He Himself has said, 'God is exalted above what they describe' (37:180)."[54] Qūnawī, in *Miftāḥ al-ghayb*, says the following concerning transcendence:

> All multiplicity is tangible, yet its unity is extrapolated by the intellect or it is intuited. All of this pertains to the properties of existence, or the forms relating to His knowledge, or the qualities necessary for existence, insofar as the essence of manifestation is coupled with each entity, by it and for it, accordingly. In whichever way you express it, He is not existence, but existence is one. He is not perceived by others since there is nothing that contrasts Him.[55]

As for immanence, it is an aspect of God's similarity with creation through which He is known. There is ample evidence in the Qurʾān that God is near, knowable, approachable and hears, "God is with you wherever you are" (57:4); "He is nearer to you than the jugular vein" (50:16); "Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God" (2:115); "When my servants ask you about Me—surely I am near. I respond to the supplication when the caller calls upon Me" (2:186); "If you were to extend a rope [to the lowest level of the earth] it would reach God."[56] God has made Himself known through his signs, indicated by the verse, "We will show them Our signs on the horizons and in themselves so it becomes clear to them that He is the Truth" (41:53).

Knowledge of God's Essence, however, is impossible, either through the prism of existence or through God Himself, since "None knows God but God." In the commentary of *Surat al-Fātiḥa*, Qūnawī says the following concerning immanence:

> Whatever is seen and perceived, in whichever form of perception, it is but God, according to one of His aspects, that necessitates individuation and the multiplicity of manifestation for a perceiver. These are the properties of that divine aspect, although He Himself is in perfect singularity, that is a singularity which is the origin of every unity and multiplicity, the simple, the compound, the manifest and the hidden. So understand![57]

The true gnostic holds both transcendence and immanence, as Jāmī states:

> One who holds transcendence without immanence falls short of recognizing the limitlessness of God. To the extent that he maintains transcendence, He remains deprived of the gnosis of the individuations of light and the multiplicity of manifestations. Likewise, one who holds immanence without transcendence is deficient, materializing Him and perceiving the Absolute Being as limited. But he who combines both transcendence and immanence and maintains that each is an established fact concerning Him which describe Him, is the true gnostic and the realized Perfect Man.[58]

The Shaykh (Ibn al-ʿArabī) has said:

> If you speak of transcendence, you delimit
> If you say immanence, you delimit
> But if you speak of both, you hit the mark
> You are a master and leader of gnosticism.[59]

The Oneness of Being

The concept of the oneness of Being (*waḥdat al-wujūd*) is central to philosophical Sufism, a doctrine attributed to Ibn al-ʿArabī's school.[60] According to Chittick, Ibn al-ʿArabī never used the term and Qūnawī used it on two occasions. The concept crystallized with later commentators and became a focal point for the medieval polemic against Ibn al-ʿArabī's ontology, claiming that it supported heretical views such as unificationism (*ittiḥād*) and incarnationism (*ḥulūl*).[61] The doctrine is simply the idea that there is nothing in existence except God and His manifestations, as God described Himself in the Qurʾān, "He is the First, the Last, the Manifest, the Hidden" (57:3). The Sufis hold this doctrine to be true monotheism as expressed by Imām ʿAlī: "God is in all things but not by being contained within them, and He is separate from all things but not by being isolated from them."[62]

This idea expresses that God's oneness is not compromised by the multiplicity of His manifestation nor is creation separate from His Being. Being remains a single reality appearing in different forms according to the degrees of its manifestation, despite multiplicity and transformation.

Ibn al-ʿArabī describes two types of unity, employing the terms *aḥad* and *wāḥid*. The first type is true unity, also referred to as absolute unity. This type of unity does not allow for any multiplicity or duality whatsoever, either conceptually or in reality. Ibn al-ʿArabī calls it *aḥadiyya*, the unity of the one, derived from the word *aḥad*: "The *aḥad* does not accept association nor worship since worship is directed towards the Lord (*al-rabb*) and the *aḥadiyya* is transcendent … The *aḥad* is exalted, forbidden to encroach, remains in obscurity without theophany."[63]

This is the undifferentiated state of Being, as Qūnawī states, "Just as Being, in respect to its Reality, is one and undivided, so too in respect to its [outward] form, it is one and undifferentiated."[64]

The second type of unity denoted by the term *wāḥid* is the "unity of the many" or the unity of the names or relative unity; it is the origin of multiplicity. Multiplicity here is of the names, not contingent existence, since the names are one with the divine Essence, but individual with respect to their own essences. The divine names are unified by virtue of their unification with the Essence, although they are reflections of its absolute unity. Absolute unity of the Essence is not a quality superadded to it, whereas the names possess a type of unity that is colored with the multiplicity of their individuation.[65] Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> The one (*wāḥid*) is not made two by any other than itself. Number and multiplicity become manifest through its activity in conceptual levels not existence, for everything in existence is one (*wāḥid*), and were it not the case, it would not be correct to assent to divine unity.[66]

Individual entities are associated with Being through, according to some authors, an illuminative relation (*al-iḍāfa al-ishrāqiyya*). This relation is conceptual because Being qua Being is singular and not qualified by multiplicity. The multiplicity of manifestation does not mean that entities enter and leave existence as non-being is a metaphor for the transfer of Being from one state to another. When an entity ceases to exist in the external world, the relationship between its existence and its quiddity is severed; it is not the transformation of its existence into non-existence, since Being is never affected by non-being. A thing never having received existence, either remains in the unseen divine knowledge, or acquires external existence, the final plane of Being's manifestation.

The Sufis often explain the oneness of Being through the imagery of light, for light is a single reality that possesses the spectrum of colors; it is luminous in itself and illuminates others. Likewise, creation emanates from Being in the same way that different colors of light emerge by passing through a prism. The prism is analogous to the different planes of reality through which manifestation takes shape. Thus, Being, like light, is a singular reality that is luminous in itself and illuminates others by manifesting through the prism of existence.

The Doctrine of Divine Unity (*Tawhīd*)

The oneness of Being relates to its singularly important corollary: divine unity (*tawhīd*). No subject is more important than *tawhīd* as it is the foundation of the Abrahamic faiths. *Tawhīd*, lexically, means "to make one" and refers to the existence of one God. Its contrary is polytheism (*shirk*), which is ascribing partners to God. Other terms such as atheism (*ilḥād*) and unbelief

(*kufr*) also denote rejecting God or swerving from the truth. The outward profession of God's oneness is the least form of *tawḥīd*, which conforms to the religious law. Its inward recognition is called existential *tawḥīd*, whose contrary is hidden polytheism, referred to in the verse, "Most of them do not believe in God except by associating partners with Him" (12:106), and the hadith of the Prophet, "Polytheism (*shirk*) in my nation is more hidden than the crawling (*dabīb*) of a black ant on a smooth stone on a dark night."[67] Hidden polytheism exists for the believer who has not purified the interior from "otherness" and has not reached the higher levels of inward *tawḥīd*.

According to the people of reality (*haqīqa*), *tawḥīd* is divesting the Essence of all concepts, intellectual or imaginal. For this reason, true *tawḥīd* is rarely attained, as Ḥaydar Āmulī says,

> Know that the reality of divine unity is greater than that which can be expressed in words or intimated by allusions. Attempting to know it through expression is a veil and alluding to the aspect of its luminosity is a face-veil (*niqāb*) because intellects and minds cannot fathom the transcendence of its reality and thoughts and imaginings cannot succeed in grasping its sanctity.[68]

Thus, no one knows it except the One, or only God knows God. When it is said that no prophet or saint has realized it, it means they know it only according to their capacity. Imam ʿAlī eloquently describes divine unity in the opening sermon of the *Nahj al-Balāgha*:

> The foremost [principle] of religion is knowledge of Him, and the perfection of this knowledge is believing in Him, and the perfection of this belief is affirming His oneness, and the perfection of this affirmation is positing transcendence for Him, and the perfection of this transcendence is to divest Him of all attributes—because every attribute indicates that it is other than the object of attribution, and because every such object is other than the attribute. So, whoever ascribes an attribute to God, the Glorified, has conjoined Him [with something else], and whoever so conjoins Him has made Him twofold, and whoever makes Him twofold has fragmented Him, and whoever thus fragments Him is ignorant of Him. And whoever points to Him confines Him, and whoever confines Him counts Him; and whoever asks, "In what?" encloses Him, and whoever asks, "On what?" isolates Him. He is a Being, but not by way of any becoming; He exists, but not from having been non-existent; with all things, but not through association; and other than all things, but not through separation; He acts, but not through movements and instruments; He sees, even when nothing of His creation was to be seen; solitary, even when there was none whose intimacy might be sought or whose absence might be missed.[69]

Imam ʿAlī asserts that the first and foremost principle is the knowledge of God, the knowledge of divine unity. When he says, "the perfection of this purification is to divest Him of all attributes," he is highlighting the oneness of His being or the Essence without reference to the attributes. Over time, Sufi authors added their own definitions of *tawḥīḍ*, which Āmulī narrates in the following selection from *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*:

> The best expressions and allusions on divine unity are the following: *tawḥīd* is "affirming the eternal and negating the engendered," "isolating (*ifrād*) the eternal from the engendered," "the removal of relations," "affirming oneness without a first or last," "affirming oneness without association in attribute or description," "affirmation identity (*ʿayn*) without attribute or description," "negating the action and affirming the agent," "the unspeakable because if the speaker describes something, he affirms 'otherness' which undermines unity," "forgetting all else but divine unity," "the effacement of human effects and isolating (*tajarrud*) divinity," and "the subsistence of God and the annihilation of everything other than Him." "He who imagines that he comprehends divine unity, having conceived its meanings, established its terms, descriptions and attributes has not even smelled the fragrance of it. He who has affirmed all of this and negated it, is a monotheist in principle, not in reality."[70]

Thereafter, Āmulī classifies the types of divine unity, quoting the two masters, Ibn al-ʿArabī and Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī:

> According to the perfect and complete Shaykh Ibn al-ʿArabī—may God sanctify his spirit—divine unity is two types, as he mentioned in *Tadbirāt al-ilāhiyya* (Divine Governance), "Divine unity is two types, the unity of oneness and the individual unity (*fardāniyya*). The former is the *tawhīd* of the sinners from the Islamic community. It is correct but founded on incorrect principles. The individual unity is the divine unity of the prophets, saints and the gnostics among the Islamic Imams; it is a correct type of divine unity which is founded on sound principles."[71]
>
> According to the greatest master, the foremost (*ṣadr*) in truth, creed and religion, al-Qūnawī—may God sanctify his spirit, "Divine unity is divided into three types: unity of the Acts, Attributes and Essence." He has stated this in some of his treatises, gaining affirmation by the Prophet's—peace be upon him—words, "I seek refuge in Your pardon from Your punishment, I seek refuge in Your satisfaction from Your anger, I refuge in You from You!"[72]

The nature of God and His relation to creation in Islamic theological and philosophical texts produced numerous arguments. Some of these are problematic while others fall outside the fold of Islam. The views that Āmulī considers problematic are the following: hedonism (*ibāḥa*), heresy (*ilḥād*),

incarnation (*ḥulūl*), pantheism (*ittiḥād*), separation (*farq*) and union (*jamʿ*), anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) and transcendence (*tanzīh*).[73]

Hedonism (*ibāḥa*) is to see existence in a multiplicity of manifestations, viewing all phenomena in the same light, without distinguishing between good and evil, pure and impure, lawful and unlawful. This is the view of the pure materialist who sees only external existence and without entertaining a concept of sin or unseen realities underlying outward forms. This view is clearly rejected by Islam and divinely inspired religious doctrines.

According to the second view, one sees existence as a multiplicity of manifestations but adheres to the inward to the exclusion of the outward. The result is the abandonment of the outward form of the Law and any type of religious code. This view has also been rejected by the majority of scholars as a form of heresy (*ilḥād*).

Pantheism (*ittiḥād*) holds that all things are God, that God is identical with the world and vice-versa. As such, one sees himself as a part of God. This view has been wrongly attributed to Ibn al-ʿArabī for he says, "He is identical to all things in manifestation, but not identical to them in their essences. Rather, He is He and things are things."[74]

Incarnation (*ḥulūl*) posits that God inheres in the manifestations. That is, God descends to the plane of the contingent, whereas pantheism posits that one rises to the plane of divinity. Considering the previous two views, Qayṣarī says, "Incarnation (*ḥulūl*) and pantheism (*ittiḥād*) between two things that are distinct in every aspect are considered polytheism for God's folk, due to the annihilation of 'otherness' by the light of the One (*al-wāḥid*), the Compeller (*al-qahhār*)."[75]

If taken in isolation, the views relating to mystical states, separation (*farq*) and union (*jamʿ*), may have problematic consequences. In the former, one sees creation but is veiled from seeing God, and in the latter, one sees God but is veiled from seeing creation.

Finally, the views of anthropomorphism (*tashbīh*) and transcendence (*tanzīh*), stood at the heart of many theological debates. The former holds that God is immanently similar to His creation, and the latter holds that God transcends creation in every way. Āmulī states that the former begets heresy and unbelief, and the latter begets the inability to recognize causes. Accusations that Ibn al-ʿArabī's beliefs fell into one or more of these categories were ubiquitous, but mostly coming from the exoteric thinkers, namely, the theologians and legalists.

Let us now turn to Kāshānī's exegesis on the chapter on divine Unity (*al-ikhlāṣ*), a representative selection on the doctrine of *tawḥīd*. Āmulī cites the whole section in *Jāmiʿ al-asrār* prefaced by a few remarks. He says:

> The first premise—that existence is founded on divine unity and that its degrees are encompassed by it—is evidenced by His saying, "Say: He is *Allah*, the Singular (*qul huwa Allah aḥad*)," because all of it expresses this very meaning, which is related from the Prophet—peace and blessing be upon him and his family—saying, "The seven heavens and earths

are founded upon, 'Say, He is *Allah*, the One.'" According to the esoteric commentators, particularly, the great master and paragon of truth, creed and religion, ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī—may God sanctify his spirit—in his book *Taʾwīlāt*.[76]

Kāshānī writes:

"Say!" (*qul*) is the command issuing from the Comprehensive Reality (*ʿayn al-jamʿ*) of the Essence, emanating upon the individual manifestations of the Names within the Presence of Unity.

He (*huwa*) expresses the reality of pure Singularity, that is, the Essence qua Essence, without being conditioned by the attributes—which none knows but He.

Allah is in apposition to *huwa*,[77] which is the name of the Essence inclusive of all the attributes. The apposition indicates that the attributes are not superadded to the Essence but identical with it, distinguished only conceptually. This is why this noble chapter has been named, *al-Ikhlāṣ* (Sincerity), because it purifies the taint of multiplicity from the reality of Singularity. Amīr al-Muʾminīn (ʿAlī) said, "Perfect sincerity is the negation of attributes because every attribute is other than what it describes and the attributed is other than the attribute." […][78]

Singular (*aḥad*) is the predicate of the subject, *huwa*, which has no multiplicity in any aspect whatsoever, conceptually or in reality. The difference between Singular (*aḥad*) and One (*wāḥid*) is that the former denotes the Essence alone without any notion of multiplicity, that is, pure Reality which is the source of all other realities. It is Being qua Being, unrestricted by generality or particularity, unconditioned by predication or its lack thereof. "One" denotes the Essence while conceiving the multiplicity of attributes. It is the plane of the divine names since a "name" denotes the Essence in connection with an attribute.

[God] expressed pure Reality known only to Himself by *huwa*, which He placed in apposition to the name *Allah*, the divine name that encompasses all the attributes as one with the Essence. He called it the Singularity, affirming that conceptual multiplicity has neither reality nor negates its singularity or unity. In reality, the Presence of Unity is identical with the Singularity as drops of water are one with the sea.

His saying, "He is the eternal" (*Allāhu-l-ṣamad*),[79] refers to the Essence on the plane of Unity in relation to the divine names. It is the absolute support because every contingent thing is dependent on it and subsists through it. He is the absolute Needless and all things are in need of Him, as He says, "God is Needless, and you are the needy" (47:38).[80]

Kāshānī's exegesis on divine unity visibly demonstrates that the central themes of philosophical Sufism are inextricably rooted in the Qurʾān and hadith.

With respect to the divine Ipseity (*huwiyya*), Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> As for the seal of the divine names, it is the same as the beginning and it is *huwa*, as He says, "He is God, there is not God but He!" (59:22). He began with *huwa*, then brought forth the name *Allah*, which encompasses all the names in detail, then a negation. So, He negated this degree for anyone but Him, and necessitated it for Himself by saying, "except Him." Thus, He began with *huwa* and ended with *huwa*, and all of the individual divine names are subsumed under the name *Allah*, which comes after His saying "*huwa*." Thus, the word *huwa* is more general than the word *Allah* for it alludes to God and every unseen thing, and to all things that have an identity (*huwiyya*); there is nothing that does not have an identity, whether it is known or mentioned, existent or non-existent.[81]

The Universal Degrees

The Universal Degrees of Being are the most important divisions of divine manifestation.[82] This section will introduce some key terms that will be revisited in later chapters. Each of these degrees or stations are viewed in light of a particular qualification. When Being is not conditioned by anything at all, it is called the exclusive Singularity (*al-aḥadiyya*). It is the degree in which the names and attributes are without distinction and differentiation. It is the first individuation of the unknowable Essence, above which there is no station, as Qayṣarī says, "The degree of Singularity effaces all the attributes and names; it is called the Comprehensive Union (*jamʿ al-jamʿ*), the Ultimate Reality (*ḥaqīqat al-ḥaqāʾiq*) and the Cloud (*al-ʿamāʾ*)."[83]

The degree of Singularity is not conditioned or qualified by anything, even the names and attributes, as in the verse, "God is independent of the worlds" (3:97). Another term for this degree is the Cloud (*al-ʿamāʾ*), because it is a veil and isthmus between the unknowable Essence and the multiplicity of the names and attributes. In the same way that a cloud is a veil and an isthmus between the earth and the sky, Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The sea of the Cloud is the isthmus between God and creation."[84]

If Being is conditioned by the names and attributes, it is called, "The degree of Divinity (*al-ulūhiyya*), the Unity (*al-wāḥidiyya*) and the station of Union (*maqām al-jamʿ*)."[85] This degree is "manifest" in relation to the degree of Singularity while hidden to those below it. For this reason, the degree of Singularity is the absolute Unseen and the external world is the absolute manifest. Although only God is aware of the absolute Unseen, the gnostic may become aware of the relative unseen realms depending on the strength of his spiritual vision.

If this degree is viewed in light of bringing things to their completion and perfection, it is called the station of Lordship (*al-rubūbiyya*), since the name *al-rabb* (Lord) involves the aspect of nurturing and sustaining.

If Being is viewed in light of the divine Ipseity (*huwiyya*) pervading all existence, like a river flowing into streams, it is referred to as Expansive Being (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*) or the Breath of the Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*), from which creation emanates, or the Outstretched Parchment (*al-riqq al-manshūr*), on which existential divine words are written. It is also called the First Engenderer (*al-ṣādir al-awwal*), which some say is the degree before the creation of the First Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*). The First Intellect is the first creation in the contingent world, emanating from the First Engenderer, which is not considered to be part of the contingent realm.

If Being is viewed with respect to forms in the divine knowledge, it is governed by the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*), the Hidden (*al-bāṭin*) and the First (*al-awwal*), since they have not emerged from the plane of the hidden to the plane of the manifest. Therefore, Being is the Lord of Permanent Archetypes, which are the objects of divine knowledge.

When Being is conditioned by universality it refers to the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), which is all-pervasive and general mercy, subsumed under the name *Allah*, as the Qurʾān says, "Call upon *Allah* or call upon the Merciful" (17:110). Each designation, the First Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*), the Tablet of Decree (*lawḥ al-qaḍā*) and the Mother of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*) refers to the fact that this degree possesses universals, and descends directly from the Permanent Archetypes, since the intellect comprehends universals. It is called the Mother of the Book since it is the source of existential realities. It is called the Supreme Pen (*al-qalam al-aʿlā*) because it inscribes particulars on the tablet of creation.

If Being is conditioned by specific, changing forms, it is the degree of the Effacer (*al-māḥī*), the Establisher (*al-muthbit*), the Life-taker (*al-mumīt*), the Life-giver (*al-muḥyī*), since these names govern the external world. Specific forms of particulars refer to the natural world, since universal forms are particularized, engendered and effaced, and undergo change and transformation. Thus, it is called the realm of Generation and Corruption (*al-kawn wa-l-fasād*) and the Book of Effacement and Establishment (*kitāb al-maḥw wa-l-ithbāt*). Particulars are mutable in this realm unlike the previous realm in which particulars are established and permanent.

> If Being is conditioned by receptivity to spiritual and corporeal forms, it is the level of the name the Receiver, the Lord of Universal Prime Matter (*al-hayūla al-ūla*), referred to as the Inscribed Book (*al-kitāb al-masṭūr*), and the Outstretched Parchment (*al-riqq al-manshūr*).[86]

Both the Inscribed Book and the Outstretched Parchment refer to receptivity, whereas the names, the Originator and the Creator, refer to activity. Immaterial spiritual forms are related to the rational intellects and souls since the latter are immaterial and possess the capacity to acquire knowledge. These divine names are associated with each descending degree of Being, which is governed by the divine names appropriate for it; this is the degree of the Omniscient.

> "If Being is conditioned by the ability to affect, it is the degree of the Active (*al-fāʿil*), also called the Originator (*al-mūjid*), the Creator (*al-khāliq*), and the Lord of Universal Nature (*al-tabīʿa al-kulliyya*). If it is conditioned by immaterial spiritual forms, it is called the degree of the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*), the Separator (*al-mufaṣṣil*), the Arranger (*al-mudabbir*), and the Lord of the Rational Intellects and Souls (*al ʿuqūl wa-l-nufūs al-nāṭiqa*). The immaterial Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-mujarrad*) is the Spirit in the view of God's folk. That is why it is said that the First Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*) is the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-qudus*).[87] What the former refer to as the immaterial rational soul (*al-nafs al-mujarrada al-nāṭiqa*), the latter call the heart (*al-qalb*), since universals are specified in it and witnessed individually therein.[88]

The spirit and the heart are the microcosmic realities of the human being corresponding to the macrocosmic realities of the Supreme Spirit, the Holy Spirit, or the First Intellect.

Finally, the degree of the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*) is the unification of all divine and existential worlds. Central to the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī, the concept of the Perfect Human will be discussed in forthcoming chapters along with many of the terms introduced in this section.

Notes

1 This refers to the two main branches of philosophy: ontology, which investigates the nature of being and epistemology, which studies the nature, origin and limits of human knowledge.
2 Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 99.
3 See Osman Bakar, *Classification of Knowledge in Islam* (Cambridge, 2012).
4 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 25–29.
5 God's name *Allah* is derived from the Arabic root letters *a-l-h*, whose most basic meaning is "to be perplexed," from the verb *aliha. Allah* is the proper name applied to the Being who exists necessarily, by Himself, comprising all the attributes of perfection, a proper name denoting the true God …, and "al" being inseparable from it, not derived. See E.W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon* (Cambridge, 1984). The word takes on the meaning of the passive participle, *maʾlūh* which means "that about which the minds are perplexed." Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzān fī tafsīr al-Qurʾān* (Beirut, 1997), 1:21.
6 For example, existence contains good and evil, but God is only good.
7 Reality (*ḥaqīqa*) is the true meaning of a thing as opposed to its metaphorical meaning (*majāzī*). It also signifies the heart of a thing or matter, its true nature, its essence, and thus, the inviolable innermost self of a thing and its sanctity (*ḥurma*). See Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿArab* (Beirut, 1996).
8 E.W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 605.
9 Ḥasan Ḥasanzāda Āmulī, *Risāla-yi fārsī annahu-l-ḥaqq* (Qum, 1994), 27.
10 Muḥammad Aʿlā b. ʿAlī Tahānawī, *Kashshāf iṣṭilāḥāt al-funūn* (Tehran, 1967), 329.
11 Muḥammad b. ʿAlī b. Ibn Bābawayh al-Ṣadūq, *al-Tawḥīd* (Beirut, 2008), 286.
12 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:85
13 See Reza Shah-Kazemi, *Imam ʿAli From Concise History to Timeless Mystery* (London, 2019).
14 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, ed. S. al-Ṣāliḥ (Beirut, 2004), sermon 186, 282–283.

15 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 1, 39–40.
16 Qayṣarī discusses this hadith in his treatise *al-Tawḥīd wa-l-nubuwwa*, ed. Āshtiyānī in *Rasāʾil-i-Qayṣarī*, 13. It is mentioned in Muḥammad b. Ḥamza Fanārī, *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, ed. M. Khwājavī (Tehran, 1995), 79. See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 394, n13.
17 "To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names" (7:180).
18 In scholastic philosophy, quiddity answers the question "what is it?" deriving from the Latin word *quidditas* which is a literal translation of the Greek *ti en einai* (τὸ τί ἦν εἶναι) in Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. See *The Complete Works of Aristotle: The Revised Oxford Translation*, ed. J. Barnes (Princeton, 1984), book 7, section 1029b.
19 For an overview of Ṣadra's ontology see Mulla Sadrā's *Kitāb al-mashāʿir*, trans. S. H. Nasr, ed. I. Kalin, *The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations*, (Provo, 2014); Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Ghurar al-farāʾid*, trans. T. Izutsu and M. Mohaghegh, *The Metaphysics of Sabzavārī* (Delmar, NY, 1977).
20 Mullā Ṣadrā (Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī), *Sharḥ al-hidāyat al-Athīriyya* (Beirut, 2001), 245. Āshtiyānī discusses in detail the different views of Being held by the Philosophers, Illuminationists, the Sufis and the school of Mullā Ṣadrā, which is Transcendent Philosophy (*al-Ḥikmat al-mutaʿāliya*).
21 According to the logicians, mental attributes are either primary intelligibles (*maʿqulāt al-awwaliyya*) or secondary intelligibles (*maʿqulāt al-thānawiyya*). Primary intelligibles are propositions that the mind assesses through its immediate association with the external world. When the blackness of coal is observed in the external world, the attribute of "blackness" is applied to the external existence of the coal and is performed immediately through sensory perception. Secondary intelligibles are propositions that require the operation of the rational faculty and do not have external extension. The concepts "necessary" and "contingent" are of this type since the rational faculty must be exercised and without reliance on sense perception. Universals such as "human," "genus," or "differentia" are descriptions of primary intelligibles but are ascertained through ratiocination. Secondary intelligibles are either philosophical, describing external objects such as "paternity," or logical, describing conceptual referents, such as genus and species.
22 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 35.
23 Chittick translates the term *taʿayyun* as entification.
24 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 70:20.
25 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 27.
26 Although it was mentioned that quiddity is the delimiting definition of a thing, when applied to Being qua Being, it refers to its Essence. For this reason, some of the philosophers and Sufis say, "His quiddity is His Ipseity (identity)."
27 Ṣadrā, *The Book of Metaphysical Penetrations*, 6–7.
28 Genus and differentia are the mental constituents of quiddities. For example, the philosophers define man as a "rational animal," *animal* being the genus and *rational* being the differentia.
29 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 31.
30 Inversion (*inqilāb*) is a violation of the law of identity since a thing cannot be itself and its opposite at the same time.
31 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 105.
32 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 35.
33 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 41.
34 Ibn Sīnā, *Kitāb al-najāt*, ed. M. Fakhry (Beirut, 1985), 261–262. See also Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Three Muslim Sages* (New York, 1976), 26; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines* (Albany, 1993), 199; Seyyed Hossein Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present: Philosophy in the Land of Prophecy* (Albany, 2006), 71; Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition* (Leiden, 1988).

35 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 127.
36 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 25.
37 The natural universal possesses universality in the mind and is capable of corresponding to a multiplicity of things such as "human," which possesses universality in the mind and corresponds to referents in the external world. Genus is also a universal but does not have a referent in the external world and is therefore not a "natural" universal, unlike "human." Muḥammad Ḥusayn Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *Bidāyat al-ḥikma*, trans. A. Qulī Qarāʾī, *The Elements of Islamic Metaphysics* (London, 2003), 178.
38 Commenting on the *Faṣṣ* of ʿĪsa in the *Fuṣūṣ*, Qayṣarī says, "Nature in the view of the Sufis refers to the spiritual meaning pervading all existence, whether it is intellect, soul, immaterial, or corporeal, although for the philosophers it refers to the power pervading all bodies." Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 949.

He further defines the natural universal in his commentary on the *Fāṣṣ* of Idrīs in the *Fuṣūṣ*, "Know that 'natural' in the view of the people of truth refers to the Dominion (*malakūt*) of the body, and it is a power that pervades all bodies, whether elemental or celestial, simple or compound. It is other than the form of the type (*al-ṣuwar al-nawʿiyya*) that exists for bodies for it partakes in the entire body and specifies the form of the type. It is an instrument of the Universal Soul to engender the body and govern it. In the animal, it is the animal spirit, through which there is action and reaction." Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 344.
39 Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 3191. Ibn al-ʿArabī explains that the verb *kān* does not denote temporality but existence.
40 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣus al-ḥikam, 185*.
41 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 47.
42 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 47.
43 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 47. Entities become manifest from the hiddenness of their Permanent Archetypes and return to the Hidden after their allotted period in the world expires.
44 Ṭūsī, *al-Murāsalat*, 99–100, cited in Dagli, *Ibn al-ʿArabī and Islamic Intellectual Culture*, 73.
45 Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 139.
46 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 49.
47 Being qua Being does not undergo intensity and weakness in its Essence because these are applied only to accidents such as "blackness" and "whiteness" that exist in a specific locus.
48 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 51.
49 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 51.
50 Ipseity means individual identity and selfhood.
51 Jawādī Āmulī, *Tabyīn-i barāhīn-i ithbāt-i khudā* (Qum, 2017), 15.
52 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 35.
53 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 69:292.
54 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:659 (II 672.19).
55 Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, *Miftāḥ al-ghayb*, ed. M. Khwājavī (Tehran, 1995), 21.
56 Abū ʿĪsa Tirmidhī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaḥīḥ wa huwa Sunan al-Tirmidhī*, ed. A.M. Shakir (Cairo, 1975), 3:193, on the exegesis of *Sūrat al-Ḥadīd*.
57 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 332.
58 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 127.
59 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fūṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 70. See the *faṣṣ* of Noah. Cited in Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 127.
60 See "A History of the Term *Waḥdat al-Wujūd*" in William Chittick, *In Search of the Lost Heart: Explorations in Islamic Thought*, eds. M. Rustom, A. Khalil and K. Murata (Albany, 2012), 86–88.

61 Ibn al-Taymiyya (d. 728/1328), the Hanbalī scholar leveled the harshest polemic against Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers. See Alexander Knysh, *Ibn ʿArabi in the Later Islamic Tradition* (New York, 1998), 88.
62 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, Sermon 1, 40.
63 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Kitāb Alif*" in *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī* (Beirut, 2001), 38.
64 Cited in Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences," where he mentions that Qūnawī wrote this sentence as a marginal note on *Iʿjāz al-bayān*. Jāmī quotes it in *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 73.
65 Another type of unity is numerical unity which is in contrast to duality and multiplicity, since the number "one" is conceived in relation to the number "two," "three," and so on. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "If you multiply one with itself, it does not give rise to multiplicity." Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Kitāb Alif*," 39.
66 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Kitāb Alif*," 38.
67 Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr fī aḥādīth al-bashīr al-nadhīr* (Beirut, 2017), no. 4918.
68 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 70.
69 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-Balāgha*, sermon 1, 39–40.
70 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 74.
71 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 77.
72 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 78.
73 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 216–220.
74 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*: 2:474 (II 484.23).
75 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 223.
76 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 50–51.
77 Apposition is a relationship between two or more words or phrases in which the two units are grammatically parallel and have the same referent.
78 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, Sermon 1, 39.
79 Literally, *ṣamad* refers to something solid and impenetrable. This enigmatic word also means the eternal, the master and the one who is sought by all creation. See Seyyed Hossein Nasr, Caner K. Dagli, Maria M. Dakake, Joseph E.B. Lumbard, and Mohammed Rustom, *The Study Quran: A New Translation and Commentary* (New York, 2015), 2848–2852.
80 ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī, *Tafsīr Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Beirut, 2001), 2:468. Kāshānī's *al-Taʾwīlāt al-Qurʾān* is published as *Tafsīr Ibn al-ʿArabī*.
81 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:497–498 (III 514.19). For a discussion on *huwiyya* see Ismail Lala, *Knowing God: Ibn al-ʿArabī and ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Qāshānī's Metaphysics of the Divine* (Leiden, 2020).
82 See Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: From al-Qūnawī al-Qayṣarī" in *The Muslim World* 72 (1982): 107–128.
83 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 53.
84 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 1:81 (I 41.31). This degree is the source of emanation of the Permanent Archetypes, the objects of divine knowledge. Similarly, in this station the Permanent Archetypes are not distinct realities but remain hidden and latent like a seed containing all the potentialities of the tree, as yet in the form of union.
85 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 55.
86 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 57.
87 See Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Risāla rūḥ al-qudus*" in *Majmūʿ rasāʾil Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Beirut, 2000).
88 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 59.

2 The Divine Names and Attributes

Having established the principles of divine unity, this chapter investigates the first knowable characteristics of the Essence, the divine names and attributes. While the clearest expression of divine unity is the *kalima*.[1] the first verse, also known as the *basmala*, of the opening chapter of the Qurʾān,[2] gives us insight into the rank of the divine names: "In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate" (1:1). Imam ʿAlī said:

> Know that all the secrets in the divine books are in the Qurʾān. All that is in the Qurʾān is in *al-Fātiha*. All that is in *al-Fātiha* is in the *bismillah*. All that is in the *bismillah* is in the *bāʾ*. All that is in the *bāʾ* is in the dot under the *bāʾ*, and I am the dot under the *bāʾ*.[3]

Āmulī explains that the *basmala* "encompasses every divine and existential, initial and final degree. Every virtue contained in every divine book is epitomized in it, because every virtue is contained in the Qurʾān."[4] The divine names refer to the realities of the Essence through which manifestation takes place. Interpreting the *basmala*, Kāshānī says:

> A thing is known through its name. The names of God are the characteristics and identities of the forms through which His qualities and Essence are known. *Allah* is the name of the absolute divine Essence qua Essence, which is neither positively nor negatively conditioned by qualities. Through the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), each thing reaches its perfection according to its capacity and wisdom. Through the Compassionate (*al-raḥīm*), human beings reach spiritual perfections with respect to their endpoints.[5]

Since the Essence of God is unknowable, names and attributes cannot be applied to that degree. God is known, however, through the relationships and properties of His manifestations in the descending degrees of creation. God reveals Himself through the agency of the properties by which He has described Himself. Ibn al-ʿArabī says in the *Futūḥāt*, "Are the names ontological entities or not? They are relations and names for intelligible,

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non-ontological realities, so the Essence does not become multiple through them. Something becomes multiple through ontological entities, not through properties, relationships and ascriptions."[6] Elsewhere he says:

> When God created the world, we found that it had diverse levels (*marātib*) and realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*), each of which demanding a specific relationship with God … But He does not become multiple through them. If they were ontological qualities (*umūr wujūdiyya*) subsisting within Him, they would make Him multiple.[7]

Qayṣarī defines the divine names in the following:

> The Essence, together with a specific attribute, with respect to one of its theophanies, is called a "name". The "Merciful" is the Essence qualified by mercy, likewise, the "Compeller" is the Essence qualified by compulsion. These verbal names are the names of the names. Thus, the meaning of "the name is identical to the Named" becomes clear.[8]

The Qurʾān refers to them as the Most Beautiful Names (*al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*) as in the verse, "Say, 'Invoke *Allah* or invoke the Merciful. Whichever of His Names you invoke, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names'" (17:110).[9] The divine names are the foundations of existence and the underlying thread of the Qurʾān.[10] Creation refers to the divine name the Creator (*al-khāliq*) and sustained by the Sustainer (*al-qayyūm*). Similarly, all things in existence, whether material or immaterial, return to the divine names from which they originate and by which they are governed.

According to hadith, the Most Beautiful Names are ninety-nine in number. Other names are specified in the Bible, Torah and gleaned from Prophetic narrations.[11] We also know from the Qurʾānic narrative of Adam's creation that God gave Adam exclusive knowledge of the divine names:

> When your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to set a representative on the earth," they said, "Will You place in it one who will cause corruption and shed blood, while we celebrate Your praise and proclaim Your sanctity?" He said, "Certainly I know what you do not know." He taught Adam the names—all of them. Then He presented them to the angels and said, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful" (2:30–31).

These verses indicates that the human reality was configured on the template of the divine names, through which Adam was able to understand the reality of all things and thus attain superiority over the angels.[12] Ibn al-ʿArabī's anthropology rests on the idea that man is the mirror of all the divine names, a theme we will revisit in later chapters.

The Qurʾān also distinguishes between real names and figurative names. The latter have not been specified by God and originate in the lower soul. In

other words, figurative names are false deities that do not correspond to the Named, as God reveals:

> These are but names that you have named—you and your fathers—for which God has not sent down authority. They follow nothing but conjectures and the desires of the lower soul, even when guidance has come to them from their Lord (53:23).[13]

Division of the Names

As mentioned earlier, when Being is considered in view of the Essence alone, it is known as the absolute Unseen or the divine Ipseity (*huwiyya*), and when considered with all of its perfections, without differentiation, it is called the degree of Singularity (*al-aḥadiyya*). When it is considered with all of its perfections in a differentiated state, it is called the degree of Unity (*al-wāḥidiyya*) or the second, Universal Degree. In this degree, God manifests the perfections of His Essence as infinite ontological realities known as the names and attributes. Through the divine names, the Essence obtains a vision of itself different from the one it has of itself through the Essence alone. Ibn al-ʿArabī asserts this in the first chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, "For the vision a thing has for itself in itself is not like the vision a thing has of itself in another thing."[14] The divine names the theophanies of the Essence, as Qayṣarī says:

> Know that God, the Glorified and Exalted, according to the verse, "Every day He is in a [new] state" (55:29), possesses states (*shuʾūnāt*)[15] and theophanies (*tajalliyāt*)[16] in the divine degrees and according to those states and degrees, He has attributes and names. The attributes are either affirmative or privative.[17]

Since God discloses Himself in the form of names and attributes, Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> The station of the divine names is the *barzakh* between us and the Named, so they look upon Him being that they name Him, and they look upon us since they bestow upon us effects attributed to the Named. Thus, they make the Named known and they make us known.[18]

These attributes are initially divided into positive or privative attributes, the former denoting positive predications of the divine being such as, "God is Eternal," and the latter denoting negative predications such as, "God is Needless." As for the first category, the attributes are either essential or relative. Essential attributes are those that do not presuppose a relation either to each other or to contingent existence, and are necessary for God, such as life, necessity and subsistence.

Each has a type of existence, whether it be affirmative or privative. Affirmative attributes are those whose conception does not entail non-being of any sort. They are attributes that can be predicated positively, whereas privative attributes are predicated negatively as in, "x is *not* y." Privative attributes indicate transcendence and a quality that cannot be ascribed to God. Poverty cannot be ascribed to God; thus, He is needless and independent. In reality, both positive and privative attributes are positive, since Being is the opposite of non-being, and every negative attribute is one that simply indicates transcendence.

Purely relative attributes are those that take into consideration their opposites, such as the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden. Each attribute presupposes the existence of its opposite and is not conceived in relation to any object. Relational attributes are those that presuppose an object when conceiving them, such as the Knower, which is conceived in relation to objects of knowledge. These attributes also relate to contingent existence since God is known as the Creator only when creation takes place, whereas life is essential to His Being and is conceived independently. The divine names are the first order of multiplicity that emanates directly from the degree of Singularity.

The Names of Beauty and Majesty

The principal division of the divine names is that of Beauty (*jamāl*) and Majesty (*jalāl*). Generally speaking, the names of Beauty represent God's mercy, kindness, intimacy, proximity and immanence. The names of Majesty represent awe, distance, severity and transcendence. However, in his treatise, *Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l-jamāl*, Ibn al-ʿArabī alludes to a finer point:

> Most of them connect intimacy (*al-uns*) with Beauty and awe (*al-hayba*) with Majesty. The situation is not as they have said, and yet, in a sense, it is as they have said.
>
> First of all, I say that God's Majesty is a meaning that relates Him to Himself, and He has prevented us from knowing Him through it (*al-maʿrifa bihī*). Beauty is a meaning that relates Him to us, and it is that which gives us the knowledge that we have of Him, with respect to revelations (*tanazzulāt*), visions (*mushāhidāt*) and states (*aḥwāl*).[19]

Although, Beauty and Majesty refer to the aspects of immanence and transcendence, respectively, it can also be said that God's transcendence refers to the aspect of His unknowability as in, "There is nothing like Him" (42:11), and His immanence refers to the aspect of His knowability as in, "Wheresoever you look, there is the face of God" (2:115).

However, God's theophanies are governed by both Beauty and Majesty so He becomes known by both, Qayṣarī states:

> Every beauty also has majesty, like the awe resulting from divine Beauty, for it expresses the intellect's subdual and bewilderment. Likewise, every majesty has beauty, which is the gentleness concealed in divine invincibility, as mentioned in the verse, "In retribution, there is life for you, O possessors of intellect."[20]

Āmulī views the names of Beauty and Majesty as all-inclusive. He says,

> These names, with respect to intimacy (*al-uns*) and awe (*al-hayba*) of the perceiver, are limited to the Beautiful (*al-jamāliyya*), such as the Kind (*al-laṭīf*), and the Majestic (*al-jalāliyya*), such as the Compeller (*al-qahhār*). There are no manifestations (*maẓāhir*) excluded by these two, so all manifestations are subsumed within these two categories.[21]

These names are complementary in nature and mutually inclusive of their opposite.[22] The human being epitomizes both the names of Beauty and Majesty: the spirit is transcendent and the body is immanent. Yet from another perspective, the spirit represents proximity and states of intimacy with God, through which the attributes of Beauty are known, while the body represents distance and hardship through which the attributes of Majesty are known. Thus, the human being is the union (*jamʿiyya*) of the attributes of Beauty and Majesty and the Great Isthmus (*al-barzakhiyyat al-kubrā*). The outward dimension relates to servanthood and the inward dimension relates to lordship as Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq says, "Servanthood is a reality whose essence is Lordship."[23]

Āmulī says, "A concrete example of this is the human spirit with respect to its corporeal manifestations, strictly speaking. The intellect is the manifestation of His names of Beauty, whereas the soul is the manifestation of His names of Majesty."[24] The hardship in disciplining the soul expresses the names of Majesty, while the inward spiritual states one attains expresses the names of Beauty. Conversely, pleasures and worldly comforts express the names of Beauty, whereas retribution and divine wrath express the names of Majesty. This is why Imam ʿAlī said, "Glory be to the One who expands His mercy for His friends in the severity of His trial, and who intensifies His tribulation for his enemies in the expanse of His mercy."[25] He also said, "Paradise is surrounded by trials, and the fire is surrounded by desires."[26]

Similarly, when a physician prescribes medicine to a patient, the bitterness of medicine is an expression of severity and its healing is an expression of mercy. Conversely, if the patient acts in contravention to the prescription, his outward pleasure is inward harm. Thus, all beauty possesses an aspect of majesty, and all majesty possesses an aspect of beauty.

This inverse relationship of body and spirit is particularly important for the wayfarer. One of Ibn al-ʿArabī's predecessors, Aḥmad Samʿānī (d. 534/1140), captures this duality beautifully in the following poem:

> To the bodily frames, He spoke of Lordship. To the spirits, He spoke of love.
> O frames, I am God! O hearts I am the lover!
> O frames, you belong to Me! O hearts, I belong to you!
> O frames, toil! For that is what Lordship requires from servanthood. O hearts, rejoice! Have joy in Me and sing my remembrance. For this is what is demanded by unqualified love.
> O frames, stay within the realities of struggle! O hearts, stay within the gardens of witnessing!
> O frames, occupy yourselves with ascetic discipline! O hearts, dwell in the rose gardens of beginningless gentleness!
> O frames, keep on questioning! O hearts, keep on receiving gifts
> O frames, occupy yourself with suffering! O hearts sit on top of the treasure.[27]

The poem draws out the fundamental duality of the human experience, especially with respect to wayfaring. While outwardly one experiences hardships in this world, the wayfarer's spirit finds repose in God's proximity. From another perspective, we can say that the spirit is transcendent and a manifestation of the names of Majesty, and the body is imminent, proximate and familiar, and thus a manifestation of the names of Beauty.

In Sufi spiritual psychology, there are various pairs of states that can be described as either beatific or majestic. These are contrary states such as fear (*khawf*) and hope (*rajāʾ*), and constriction (*qabḍ*) and expansion (*basṭ*). The following passage in Hujwīrī's *Kashf al-maḥjūb* discusses the relationship of two states of the wayfarer, intimacy (*uns*) and awe (*hayba*):

> Intimacy and awe are two states experienced by the dervishes who travel on the path to God. They are as follows: When God reveals Himself to the servant's heart through the witnessing of Majesty, his share in that is awe. When He reveals Himself to the servant's heart through the witnessing of Beauty, his share in that is intimacy.[28]

Multiplicity of the Names

There is an intrinsic necessity of each divine name to become manifest in existence. Every name seeks to manifest the properties, governance and period of efficacy that is intrinsic to its reality. This multiplicity of relationships creates conflict in the cosmos because the names have contrary properties, for some are of Beauty and others are of Majesty. Ibn al-ʿArabī explains this in the following passage:

> The properties of the divine names differ with respect to the names themselves. What do Avenger, Severe in Punishment and Overpowering have in common with Compassionate, Forgiving, and Subtle? For Avenger demands vengeance, while Compassionate demands the removal of

> vengeance from the same object. Each looks at the thing from its own reality. Thus, there is undoubtedly a conflict in the manifestation of its sovereignty. He who looks at the divine names will say that there is a divine conflict. That is why God said to His Prophet, "Dispute (*jidāl*) with them in the most beautiful way (*aḥsan*)" (16:125). God commanded him to dispute in the same way the divine names dispute, which is "most beautiful."[29]

Since the Essence is undifferentiated, multiplicity arises in the degree of the names. In light of this distinction, each name is a reality in itself but not ontologically separate from the Essence, since each name is only the manifestation of the Essence. A name refers to both attribute and Essence at the same time, since the name and the Named refer to a single reality. Qayṣarī writes:

> From one point of view, multiplicity originates in knowledge [intrinsic] to the Essence (*al-ʿilm al-dhātī*), because God's knowledge of His Essence through His Essence presupposes the knowledge of its perfections at the degree of Singularity. Then divine love[30] necessitates the manifestation of the Essence through each attribute becoming individuated on the plane of knowledge, then in external existence where it acquires multiplicity.[31]

According to this, the degree of Unity is the first level of multiplicity emanating from God's knowledge of His own perfections, which in turn is the source of all multiplicity. Thus, the first instance of multiplicity emanating from the singular Essence is the multiplicity of the names. Thereafter, those names manifest as the forms of realities or essences in the divine knowledge. Ibn al-ʿArabī calls these essences the Permanent Archetypes (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*).

Since the Unseen is the undifferentiated Essence that precedes specific forms, the multiplicity of the attributes originates in the Keys of the Unseen (*mafātīḥ al-ghayb*),[32] which Qayṣarī describes in the following:

> These are intelligible meanings in the Unseen of God's Being, through which divine affairs and theophanies are individuated. They are not individual entities, nor do they enter existence at all. What enters existence are the names which are individuated by God's Being at those degrees, for they exist intellectually (*ʿaql*) but not in actuality (*ʿayn*).[33]

Classification of the Names

The divine names can be classified according to their governing properties, each differing with respect to their inclusiveness and comprehensiveness, since the names possess degree, rank, scope and inclusiveness that are particular to each. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes in the *Futūḥāt*:

> The divine names which are attributed to God have various degrees of attribution. Some of them depend on others, some of them govern others, and some have more inclusive relation to the world and more effects within it than others. The world is the manifestation of these divine names.[34]
>
> […] Know that every divine name has a degree not possessed by another and every form in the world has a degree not possessed by another. So, the degrees are infinite, and they are the "ranks."[35] Some are raised and others even more so, whether they are divine or engendered, for even the engendered degrees are divine.[36]

For example, the Living (*al-ḥayy*) governs all living things and the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*) governs all sentient beings. Ibn al-ʿArabī clarifies this point in the following passage:

> We have come to know the raising of degrees from "raised above others" (24:40) with respect to the names—whatever they may be, so that some take from others according to their degrees. We know the degree of the Living (*al-ḥayy*) has the greatest degree among the names, because it is the precondition for the existence of the names; and we know that the knowledge of the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*) is more inclusive and comprehensive (*iḥāṭa*) than the Powerful (*al-qādir*) and the Desiring (*al-murīd*) since they are less inclusive than the Knowing. They are like gatekeepers (*sadana*) for the Omniscient.[37]

The first classification of the names is with respect to universality. These are the Mothers of the Names or the Seven Imāms (leaders), which possess the greatest scope and inclusiveness. Their influence permeates all of creation and includes names that are subsumed under their governance. These attributes are the foundation of all other attributes, and the precondition for the realization of the others. Qayṣarī writes:

> The attributes can be divided into those that have complete, universal scope and those that do not, even if they are inclusive of most things. The first category of the attributes are the "Mothers", called the Seven Leaders (*al-aʾimmat al-sabʿa*). They are: Life, Knowledge, Will, Power, Hearing, Sight, and Speech.[38]

While the theologian defines the attribute of Hearing as God's knowledge of all things audible, Vision as God's knowledge of all things visible and Speech as God's ability to produce speech, the Sufis view all the names and attributes as theophanies of the Essence which are identical with the Essence. As for hearing, Qayṣarī says:

> His hearing is the theophany of His knowledge connected to the reality of His own speech in the station of Comprehensive Union (*jamʿ al-jamʿ*)

> and in [the station of] the Archetypes with respect to union (*al-jamʿ*) and individuation (*al-tafṣīl*), inwardly and outwardly, not by way of vision.[39]

God hears, sees and speaks both at the level of the Essence and at every other descending degree in existence. The attribute of hearing is the mode of His knowledge of His Essential Speech, that is, He hears His speech at the degree of the Essence. It may also be said that He hears the petition of the divine names to become manifest, so they emerge from the plane of Comprehensive Union to the plane of differentiation, or it can be said that the divine hearing is the ontological receptivity of all things to hear the engendering command "Be!" which is none other than the theophany of His knowledge in the station of separation.

As for the other names, Qayṣarī says:

> His sight manifests His knowledge and its relationship to realities through vision. His speech manifests the relationship between His will (*irāda*) and His power (*qudra*) in order to reveal and engender what is in the Unseen. He, the Exalted, says, "His only command when He wills a thing is to say to it, 'Be!' and it is."[40]

When speech refers to the divine speech at the degree of the Essence, it is called Essential Speech. It is the mode of His engendering things, just as His words are the objects of creation.

The Mothers can be classified by another exhaustive classification, since every name can be subsumed under one of these four. Qayṣarī writes:

> The names are divided—by another classification—into four names, also called the Mothers. They are the First (*al-awwal*), the Last (*al-ākhir*), the Manifest (*al-ẓāhir*) and the Hidden (*al-bāṭin*), subsumed under the comprehensive name *Allah*, and the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*).[41]

The names that are associated with engendering and creation are subsumed under the First, while the names associated with the Return and Resurrection are under the governance of the Last. Similarly, every name that is connected with the external world is subsumed under the Manifest, while every name associated with the Unseen is under the governance of the Hidden. Therefore, the external world and all its requisites are the manifestations of the First and the Manifest, while the hereafter is governed by the Last and the Hidden. When the hereafter commences, that which was governed by the Manifest, such as the external world, becomes subsumed under the governance of the Hidden, since it will no longer exist, and the hidden forms and inward realities of the external world become manifest.

Names of the Essence, Attributes and Acts

The names are divided by another classification: the names of the Essence, Attributes and Acts, even if they are ultimately all names of the Essence. Those that are particular and necessary to the Essence, such as the Needless and the Eternal, are called the names of the Essence. These names include the Seven Leaders or the Mother of the Names and are also called by some Sufis, the Keys of the Unseen.[42] They are the names of the Essence because they are representative of divine unity and most faithfully portray the divine Ipseity (*huwiyya*). Those that share a relation with creation are the names of the Attributes, such as the Powerful and the Knower, while those that refer to the divine acts are the names of the Acts. However, most names fall in two categories or all three, such as the names, the Living (*al-ḥayy*) and the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*). Nevertheless, Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> The Essence qua Essence has no name, because it is not the locus of effects, nor is it known by anyone, nor is there a name indicating it and is devoid of relations. Names [exist] to define and distinguish, but this door is forbidden to all but God, since "none knows God but God."[43]

According to Qayṣarī, the names of the Essence are: *Allah*, the Lord (*al-rabb*), the King (*al-malik*), the Holy (*al-quddūs*), the Peace (*al-salām*), the Faithful (*al-muʾmin*), the Guardian (*al-muhaymin*), the Almighty (*al-ʿazīz*), the Compeller (*al-jabbār*), the Proud (*al-mutakabbir*), the Exalted (*al-ʿalī*), the Magnificent (*al-ʿaẓīm*), the Manifest (*al-ẓāhir*), the Hidden (*al-bāṭin*), the First (*al-awwal*), the Last (*al-ākhir*), the Great (*al-kabīr*), the Majestic (*al-jalīl*), the Glorious (*al-majīd*), the Truth (*al-ḥaqq*), the Evident (*al-mubīn*), the Abūndant (*al-wājid*), the Honorable (*al-mājid*), the Eternal (*al-ṣamad*), the Supreme (*al-mutaʿālī*), the Self-Sufficient (*al-ghanī*), the Light (*al-nūr*), the Inheritor (*al-wārith*), the Possessor of Majesty (*dhū-l-jalāl*), the Guardian (*al-raqīb*).

The names of the Attributes are: the Living (*al-ḥayy*), the Grateful (*al-shakūr*), the Compeller (*al-qahhār*), the Dominant (*al-qāhir*), the Determiner (*al-muqtadir*), the Strong (*al-qawī*), the Omnipotent (*al-qādir*), the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), the Compassionate (*al-raḥīm*), the Generous (*al-karīm*), the Forgiver (*al-ghaffār*), the Concealer of Sins (*al-ghafūr*), the Loving (*al-wadūd*), the Kind (*al-raʾūf*), the Forbearing (*al-ḥalīm*), the Patient (*al-ṣabūr*), the Righteous (*al-barr*), the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*), the Aware (*al-khabīr*), the Encompasser (*al-muḥṣī*), the Wise (*al-ḥakīm*), the Witness (*al-shahīd*), the All-Hearing (*al-samīʿ*), the All-Seeing (*al-baṣīr*).

The names of the Acts are: the Originator (*al-mubdiʾ*), the Trustee (*al-wakīl*), the Resurrector (*al-bāʿith*), the Responder (*al-mujīb*), the All-Encompassing (*al-wāsiʿ*), the Sufficient (*al-ḥasīb*), the Preserver (*al-muqīt*), the Protector (*al-ḥafīẓ*), the Creator (*al-khāliq*), the Maker (*al-bāriʾ*), the Fashioner (*al-muṣawwir*), the Bestower (*al-wahhāb*), the Provider (*al-razzāq*), the Opener (*al-fattāḥ*), the Constrictor (*al-qābiḍ*), the Expander (*al-bāsiṭ*), the Subduer

(*al-khāfiḍ*), the Exalter (*al-rāfiʿ*), the Bestower of Honor (*al-muʿizz*), the Abaser (*al-muẕill*), the Arbitrator (*al-ḥakam*), the Just (*al-ʿadl*), the Subtle (*al-laṭīf*), the Returner (*al-muʿīd*), the Life-giver (*al-muḥyī*), the Life-taker (*al-mumīt*), the Governor (*al-wālī*), the Accepter of Repentance (*al-tawwāb*), the Avenger (*al-muntaqim*), the Equitable (*al-muqsiṭ*), the Gatherer (*al-jāmiʿ*), the Enricher (*al-mughnī*), the Inhibitor (*al-māniʿ*), the Harmful (*al-ḍārr*), the Beneficial (*al-nāfiʿ*), the Guide (*al-hādī*), the Originator (*al-badīʿ*), the Director of Right Conduct (*al-rashīd*).[44]

In this classification, there are the Keys of the Unseen, whose knowledge is only with God,[45] or with those to whom the divine Ipseity is disclosed, such as the perfected Pole (*al-qutb*),[46] and the Keys of the Visible, which are the names governing the external world. The former is subsumed under the names the First and the Hidden, which are the origin of the Permanent Archetypes, and the latter subsumed under the names the Last and the Manifest.

The Governing Properties of the Names

The names of the Acts are subdivided in accordance with their properties (*ḥukm*, pl. *aḥkām*) as everything in existence is governed by the divine names. The names that have dominion in the phenomenal world are the names of the Acts. Each class of contingent existence displays individual properties in accordance with the names for which it is a manifestation. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The orientation of bringing 'everything other than God' (*mā siwā Allāh*) into existence is the [aspect of] Divinity (*al-ulūha*) through its properties, relations and attributes; it is these which call for effects."[47] He further says:

> No entity is brought into existence without the effects of those divine names that are connected (*mutaʿallaq*) to the worlds (*al-akwān*). However, some names are stronger in effect in that specific and determined entity, possessing a greater governance than the others; for that reason, we attribute the entity to it.[48]

As for those names governing the phenomenal world, Qayṣarī writes:

> Know that the names of the Acts are subdivided in accordance with their governing properties. There are some names whose governance is never discontinued, whose effects are infinite, pre-eternally and post-eternally, such as the names governing the holy spirits, angelic souls, and everything that, although originated, is not governed by time (*zamān*), but eternal time (*dahr*).
>
> Some govern post-eternally but not pre-eternally, such as the names governing the hereafter, for they are everlasting, mentioned by the verses that indicate their eternity and the perpetuity of their governance. They

> are not pre-eternal with respect to their manifestation since their appearance occurs only upon the termination of the worldly plane.
>
> Some neither govern pre-eternally nor post-eternally, such as the names that govern all that enter time and the worldly plane, since they are neither pre-eternal nor post-eternal with respect to their manifestation, even if their outcome is eternal in the hereafter.
>
> Those whose governance discontinues, either does so absolutely and their objects become governed by the divine absolute Unseen, as in the case of the worldly dimension, or they become concealed and hidden under the governance of another name whose scope is more comprehensive in the manifestation of its dominion.[49]

Eternal time (*dahr*) is a vessel for immaterial beings and time (*zamān*) is a vessel for material beings. The dominion of the names governing the former extends to pre-eternity, and the dominion of the latter do not extend pre-eternally or post-eternally, for the material world is both created in time and ephemeral. The hereafter is governed by the names that extend post-eternally but not pre-eternally since it follows the term of the worldly plane. The material world is governed by the Manifest and the hereafter is governed by the Hidden. However, during the Resurrection, the material world will be subsumed under the Hidden so the hereafter will become manifest.

Thus, the names of the Acts have a period or epoch in which their governance is efficacious, since creation is in constant flux. Those things in existence that cease to exist recede into the absolute Unseen. Since non-being cannot be predicated of Being, nothing that has existence can cease absolutely. Rather, things are brought into the external world through the Manifest and removed from it through the Hidden. Qayṣarī says, "The continuation of the names and their cessation in the world and the hereafter is due to the continuation and cessation of the governance of their names, respectively."[50] Commenting on the verse, "Everything runs to a stated term" (13:2), Ibn al-ʿArabī says: "God has decreed a term for each thing in a given affair to which it reaches. Then the thing transfers to another state in which it runs its course. God is the perpetual Creator in every moment."[51]

The divine names manifest themselves in accordance with their governing properties and in proportion to the capacity of their recipients. Their terms are determined through the names that actualize their essences in the divine knowledge. For this reason, some revealed laws were abrogated by others as each prophet is governed by some names over others, even if they embrace all the divine names in potential.

All things in external existence are subsumed under the Manifest, according to their external existence, and God, with respect to His manifestations, is identical with the Manifest. Previously, it was mentioned that the entities in external existence are the loci of manifestation of the divine names and attributes. Qayṣarī asserts that the entities are the names themselves for the names and the named are one:

> Every individual is a name from among the particular names, since an individual is identical with the reality [of a name] along with the accidents particular to it. This is due to the unity of the Manifest and the external locus of manifestation.[52]

Qayṣarī clarifies the relationship between the entities and the names, stating that the loci of manifestation are not ontologically separate from the realities of the names. This view rejects the idea that external realities are the individuals and external referents of the names in the way that people are the external referents (*maṣādīq*) of the quiddity "human". Entities are the manifestations of the divine names but individuals are not the manifestations of "human." This is because quiddity applies to its individuals conceptually and the divine names are ontological realities that are united with their individuals through manifestation, in the same way that the sun is united with its rays through emanation. From this perspective, the external realities are the names themselves from the perspective that they are identical with the Manifest.

Endless Creation

The divine treasures are inexhaustible, and creation is constantly being renewed, according to the verses, "Every day He is in a [new] state [of being]" (55:29), and "Have you not seen that God created the heavens and the earth in truth? If He wills, He can do away with you and produce a new creation (*khalq jadīd*)" (14:19). Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "Creation never ceases, and the entities are capable of shedding existence. In every moment (*nafas*), with respect to form, the world undergoes a new creation in which there is no repetition."[53] Infinite divine manifestation and perpetual renewal is also affirmed in the verse, "Say, 'If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea run dry before the words of my Lord were spent, even if We brought another like it to supplement'" (18:109). Theophanies are endless because the divine names and their properties are constantly combining to form new names and realities. Qayṣarī writes:

> Know that between two contrary names, there exists a name that possesses both aspects, born out of both of them, standing as an isthmus between them, just as out of two contrary qualities there is a quality that possesses an aspect of each, born from both. Similarly, the combining of names engenders others, ad infinitum, whether they are contrary or not. Each has a manifestation in [divine] knowledge and outward existence.[54]

The divine names, whether or not they have contrary properties, engender other names. These intermediate names possess some of the properties of each name, in the same way that a child possesses the qualities of both parents, yet still has its own nature. These names combine with each other to

engender other names because the divine relationships are infinite. Divine names are engendered both from contrary names and similar names, since God's theophany is perpetual and infinite and the names and attributes can combine in an infinite number of ways. These engendered names are particular and infinite, whereas the universal names are finite.

These subordinate names combine with others and engender more names, ad infinitum. Ibn al-ʿArabī cites the famous Sufi dictum from Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī's *Qūt al-qulūb*, "God never discloses Himself in a single form to two individuals nor in a single form twice."[55] Therefore, the loci of manifestation of these names are also endless since every world is a mirror of the world from which it originates. One locus may manifest various names in the same way that a person may manifest the attribute of mercy and at other times the attribute of wrath.

Assuming the Divine Character

Since the Essence is absolutely unknowable, God can be known only through the realities of the names. If the Sufi wishes to extend his inner vision from corporeal existence to God Himself, he must traverse the various realms of creation and remove the veils of contingency in order to arrive at the reality of the Named. The essence of spiritual wayfaring is to exemplify the divine character, referred to by the words of the Prophet, "Assume the characteristics of God (*takhallaqū bi akhlāq Allah*)."[56] Ibn al-ʿArabī writes, "What the philosophers mean when they speak of this is gaining similarity to the divine (*al-tashabbuh bi-l-ilāh*), but the Sufis say it is assuming the characteristics of God.[57] In his work, *Kashf al-maʿnā*, he explains the threefold relationship with respect to the divine names: attachment (*taʿalluq*), assuming characteristics (*takhalluq*) and realization (*taḥaqquq*).[58] In practical mysticism, this is known as wayfaring in the names (*al-sayr fī-l-asmāʾ*). Technically, *taʿalluq* is your absolute neediness towards God with respect to the Essence; *taḥaqquq* is to understand their meanings as they apply to God and as they apply to you; *takhalluq* is that you attribute what is appropriate to yourself and attribute to Him what is worthy of Him. It is possible to assume all the names except the name *Allah*. Theoretically, it can be said that this name has a special attachment if it indicates the Essence. Concerning God's theophany for the gnostics and lovers, Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> God reveals Himself to [the lover] in the names of creation and in His Most Beautiful Names. He believes that in the theophany of the names of creation, what he receives from God belong to him. But that is not the case. So, when he assumes the characteristics of the Most Beautiful Names, … he sees that all are His names and that the servant has no name of his own. Even the name "servant" does not belong to him, but that he has assumed it as a trait, like all the Most Beautiful Names. He

> comes to know that traveling to Him, entering upon Him, and being present (*huḍūr*) with Him take place only through His names and that the names of creation are His names.[59]

Since the goal of wayfaring is to develop and perfect one's character, each prophet brought a share of that divine ethos. It was Prophet Muḥammad who came to complete and perfect it, as he said, "I have not been sent but to perfect the noble character traits."[60] God affirmed this by saying, "Truly, you are of great character (*khuluq ʿaẓīm*)" (68:4). Ibn al-ʿArabī describes that the highest form of morality is to assume the divine character, upon which the Prophet was molded, as he says, "My Lord perfected my good morals and conduct."[61] Since God "taught man what he knew not" (96:5), Jāmī explains the meaning of teaching Adam all the names:

> God taught Adam, or the Perfect Human, all of the names, the knowledge of "tasting" and experience, making him comprehend every divine name, the necessary and active, including all the attributes and relations of lordship. For he is the necessary being through his Lord, his heart being the Throne of God, the living, knowing, able, hearing, seeing, and so on.
>
> In relation to "He taught Adam all the names" (2:31), some have said that He placed in his innate nature the subtle [reality] of every name and prepared those subtle realities to realize all the names of Beauty and Majesty.[62]

This type of theomorphic ethics is rooted in the idea that God created man in his own image or form, a recurring theme in all Abrahamic religions.[63] "Form" does not apply to bodies, but as Jāmī explains:

> The meaning of "form" is quality, since Adam was created with God's qualities, such as life, knowledge, will, power, hearing, seeing and speaking. Since realities appear in the external world through forms, the word form was used figuratively to signify the names and attributes, since God manifests in the outward through them. This is according to the people of the outward.[64]

In reality, it is God who adorns the servant with His own attributes after the annihilation of the aspect of humanness and the realization of complete servitude. In the famous *hadith qudṣī*, God says:

> My servant only comes closer to Me by his acts of supererogatory prayers until I love him. When I love him, I become his hearing by which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks, his hand by which he strikes, and his foot by which he walks.[65]

Notes

1 *Kalima*, literally means word and refers to the statement, "There is no god but God" (*lā ilāha illā Allāh*). It may apply to a single word, phrase or sentence, such as the declaration of faith (*kalimat al-tawhīd*) and the poem of Labīd, as the Prophet said, "The truest words (*kalima*) spoken by any poet are the words of Labīd." Akram al-Majid, *Sharḥ muqaddimat al-Ājurrūmiyya wa iʿrābuhā* (Beirut, 2020), 41.
2 The first and most important chapter of the Qurʾān is *al-Fātiha* (The Opener). It is also called *Umm al-kitāb* (The Mother of the Book), *Umm al-Qurʾān* (The Mother of the Qurʾān) and *Sabʿ al-mathānī* (Seven repeated [verses]). *The Study Quran: A New Translation and* Commentary, 51.
3 See also Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Kitāb al-bāʾ*" in *Majmūʿ rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 1:458.
4 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 562.
5 Kāshānī, *Tafsīr Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 7.
6 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:295 (IV 294.11).
7 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:385 (III 441.31).
8 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 69.
9 These are the names of the names, as Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "You should know that the divine names which we have are the names of the divine names." Ibn al-ʿArabī , *Futūḥāt* 2:57 (II 56.33).
10 This is because there is correspondence between the existential and written books.
11 The supplication of *Jawshan al-kabīr* (The Great Armor), for example, cited from the Prophet contains 1001 divine names.
12 Verses that identify the Most Beautiful Names, "God—there is no God but He—to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names" (20:8). "God is the Creator, the Originator, the Fashioner. To Him belong the Most Beautiful Names. Whatever there is in the heavens glorifies Him and whatever is in the earth" (59:24).
13 The Qurʾān says, "Do you dispute with me regarding names that you have named—you and your fathers—for which God has not sent down any authority? So wait! I too am waiting along with you" (7:71). "You do not worship besides Him but mere names that you and your fathers have coined, for which God has not sent down any authority. Sovereignty belongs only to God. He has commanded you to worship none except Him. That is the upright religion, but most people do not know" (12:40).
14 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 48.
15 *Shaʾn* means state, condition, case, quality, thing, affair (Lane, *Arabic–English Lexicon*; see also *Lisan al-ʿArab, sh-ʾ-n*) and *yawm* according to Ibn al-ʿArabī is the indivisible moment. See *Futūḥāt*, chapter 192; See the second chapter of Zargar, *Sufi Aesthetics*, n12. Chittick discusses this verse in *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 98.
16 *Tajallī* means to become manifest, apparent and clear, as mentioned in various places in the Qurʾān, "By the day, when it manifests" (92:2). "When his Lord revealed Himself to the mountain, He made it crumble" (7:143).
17 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 67.
18 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:199 (II 203.3).
19 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Kitāb al-jalāl wa-l-jamāl*" in *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 25. See Robert Wisnovsky, "One Aspect of the Akbarian Turn in Shīʿī Theology" in A. Shihadeh, *Sufism and Theology*, 51.
20 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 69.
21 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 134.
22 One can find an analogue to this principle in the Chinese concept of Yin/Yang. In the same way that Yin and Yang, which originate from the undifferentiated Tao, or "The Great Ultimate," they are complementary opposites, each transforming

into the other while at the same time containing an aspect of the other. Sachiko Murātā discusses the divine duality in her groundbreaking work, *The Tao of Islam: A Sourcebook on Gender Relationships in Islamic Thought* (Albany, 1992).

23 Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharīʿa* (Beirut, 1983), 7.
24 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 137.
25 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 90, 123.
26 Muslim Ibn al-Ḥajjāj, *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* (Beirut, 1994), no. 2822, Tirmidhī, *Jāmīʿ*, no. 2559. In both works, this statement is attributed to the Prophet.
27 Aḥmad Samʿānī, *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ*, 154–155, cited in Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 72. See also William Chittick, *Repose of the Spirits: A Sufi Commentary on the Divine Names* (Albany, 2019). Samʿānī's *Rawḥ al-arwāḥ fī sharḥ asmāʾ al-malik al-fattāḥ*, ed. N. Harawī (Tehran, 1989), is one of the longest Persian commentaries on the divine names.
28 ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb* (Tehran, 1979), 490.
29 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:92 (II.93.19).
30 With respect to creation emanating from divine love, Sufi authors often quote the famous hadith *qudsī*, "I was a Hidden Treasure and I loved to be known. So, I created the creation so that I would become known." Qayṣarī mentions this hadith in the chapter of Abraham in his commentary on the *Fuṣūṣ*.
31 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 71.
32 Mullā Ṣadrā, *al-Ḥikmat al-mutʿāliya fī-l-asfār al-ʿaqliyya al-arbaʿa*, eds. R. Luṭfī and I. Amīnī (Beirut 1981), 6:263, referring to the verse, "To Him belong the Keys of the Unseen" (6:59).
33 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 71.
34 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:36 (II 34.1).
35 Referring to the name "Uplifter of Degrees" (*rafīʿ al-darajāt*) in the Qurʾān 40:15.
36 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:459 (II 469.11).
37 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 4:229 (IV 228.12, 18).
38 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 73. See Bizri, "God: Essence and attributes" in *The Cambridge Companion to Classical Islamic Theology*, ed. T. Winter (Cambridge, 2008), 136.
39 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 73.
40 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 73.
41 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 73.
42 ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām fī ishārāt ahl al-ilhām* (Tehran, 2000), 64.
43 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:70 (II 69.34).
44 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 76–77. See also Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Inshāʾ al-dawāʾir*, trans. P. Fenton and M. Gloton, "Description of the Encompassing Circles" in *Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi: A Commemorative Volume*, eds. S. Hirtenstein and M. Tiernan (Shaftesbury and Rockport, 1993).
45 The hadith quoted in the introductory section of this chapter makes reference to the Reserved Names.
46 The Pole is the Perfect Human that serves as the link between God. He is the vicegerent of God who is the recipient of all the divine names and called the Pole because he is the center around which the universe circumambulates. This is not in relation to his physical body, but to the reality of his meaning and the comprehensiveness of his spirit.
47 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 1:81 (I 41.34).
48 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:458 (II 468.3).
49 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 81.
50 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 81.
51 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:627 (II 639.6).
52 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 83.
53 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:664 (II 677.30).
54 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 79.

55 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:335 (I 266.9).
56 Āmulī, *Jamiʿ al-asrār*, 363; Abū Ḥāmid al-Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asnā* (Beirut, 1982), 42; Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 581:129.
57 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:123 (II 126.8).
58 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Kashf al-maʿnā ʿan sirr asmā al-ḥusnā* (Qum, 2004), 26.
59 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:345 (II 350.23).
60 Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, no. 8595.
61 ʿAbd ʿAlī b. Jumʿa Huwayzī, *Tafsīr nūr al-thaqalayn* (Beirut, 2001) 5:389/13, cited in Muḥammad Rayshahrī, *Mizān al-ḥikma* (Beirut, 2001), 1:78.
62 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 86–87.
63 The Bible says, "The Lord with his own two hands created mankind; in a facsimile of his own face, both small and great, the Lord created them. And whoever insults a person's face, insults the face of a king, and treats the face of the Lord with repugnance. He who treats with contempt the face of any person treats the face of the Lord with contempt. (*2 Enoch* 44:1–3); And our father Isaac said, 'Jacob, my beloved son, keep my injunction which I lay down today that you preserve my body. Do not profane the image of God by how you treat it; for the image of man was made like the image of God; and God will treat you accordingly at the time when you meet him and see him face to face. He is the first and the last, as the prophets have said.' When Isaac had said this, the Lord took his soul from his body and it was white as snow." (*T. Isaac* 6:33–7:1). See George Van Kooten, "Man as God's Spiritual or Physical Image?" in *Anthropologie und Ethik im Frühjudentum und im Neuen Testament* (Groningen, 2014), 102–103.
64 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 93–94.
65 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 5: 2384–2385.

3 Divine Knowledge

Sufism is fundamentally concerned with knowledge, truth and reality. As mentioned, it relies on esoteric rather than rational, philosophical knowledge. In this section, our focus is not the human side of knowledge, which is the subject of epistemology, but God's knowledge, which still concerns ontology and the nature of Being.

There are two aspects to God's knowledge, one that refers to His knowledge of Himself and one that refers to His knowledge of His creation. It can be said that there is general agreement among the theologians, philosophers and Sufis that God's knowledge of Himself is intrinsic to His Essence.[1] This is because God is omniscient with respect to all things, including Himself. Every attribute, such as life, knowledge and power not only originate from God but are united with His Essence, so that every attribute in existence is in reality a divine attribute and name. Since all things originate from God, He is more entitled to be qualified by the attributes than the contingent entities. These attributes, which are the divine perfections emanate to the creatures and manifest through them according to their ontological receptivity. Therefore, when a creature has the ability to hear and see, it is through the manifestation of the divine names, the Hearing and the Seeing. If the human being has the capacity to know and see, it is because knowledge and sight already exist in the reality of Being.

Ibn al-ʿArabī explains the idea that God perceives the realities of things in the same way that He perceives His own Essence, saying:

> God's knowledge of Himself is identical to His knowledge of the world because the world is always being witnessed by Him, even when qualified by non-existence. But the world does not witness itself since it was not in existence. This is an ocean in which the speculative thinkers have perished, those who have rejected unveiling. From one perspective [the world] exists, so His knowledge exists and His knowledge of Himself is His knowledge of the world. So, His knowledge of the world never ceases to exist, [even] in its state of nonexistence. He gives it existence according to its form in His knowledge.[2]

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This is because Being is unitary and pervades all multiplicity such that it is both unitary and multiple, hidden and manifest. It is multiple in view of its manifestation but unitary by virtue of its Essence and reality. However, the objects of creation do not perceive its reality because of the limitation of their own ontological horizon. This is why it can be said that God pervades all existence, but all existence is not God, in the same way that a mirror reflects the sun but is not the sun itself. The mirror emits light, but not by its own essence, rather through the property of reflection. Contingent existence, therefore, is one with Being by virtue of manifestation, but other than it with respect to the Essence. Nothing encompasses Being but it is all-encompassing.

The Permanent Archetypes

In Ibn al-ʿArabī's terminology, the first theophany of Being is called the Holiest Emanation (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) through which the divine names emerge. Thereafter, the realities in the divine knowledge become individuated through the Holy Emanation (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddas*). These realities are called Permanent Archetypes (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*). The term *ʿayn* (pl. *al-aʿyān*) has many meanings in Arabic, but here it is being used in a technical sense to mean entity, essence or reality. A derivative of *ʿayn* is *taʿayyun*, a term that Ibn al-ʿArabī employs to mean the particularization or individuation of the Essence in its descending degrees.[3] Qūnawī says:

> The reality (*ḥaqīqa*) of every entity is an expression of the relationship of its eternal archetypal reality within its Lord's knowledge. It is called a "Permanent Archetype" (*ʿayn thābita*) in the terminology of the experts among God's folk, "quiddity" (*māhiyya*), a "non-existent known" (*maʿlūm maʿdūm*), a "fixed thing" (*shayʾ thābit*), and so forth, and in the terminology of others.[4]

In other words, the planes of Being are the successive particularizations, determinations or individuations of the Essence, even if the Essence qua Essence is absolute and undetermined. Thus, *taʿayyun* is any type of specification or individuation, not only that of entities.[5] They are called "*al-thābita*" because they are permanent, having always existed in the divine knowledge without change and transformation. This is because His knowledge is identical with His Essence and mutability in His knowledge would imply mutability in His Essence. Qayṣarī writes:

> Know that the divine names possess intelligible forms (*ṣuwar maʿqūla*) in the divine knowledge, since He knows His Essence, names and attributes through Himself. Those forms of knowledge, given that they are identical with the Essence, are theophanies of a special individuation (*taʿayyun*) and specific relation called Permanent Archetypes (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), whether they are universal or particular, in the terminology of God's

> folk. The rationalists call its universals "quiddities" (*māhiyyāt*) and "realities" (*ḥaqāʾiq*), and its particulars "ipseities" (*huwiyyāt*).[6]

The external worlds arise from these Archetypes and are divided into the Intellectual World (*al-ʿālam al-ʿaql*), the Imaginal World (*al-ʿālam al-mithāl*), and the material world (*al-ʿālam al-mādda*), according to one classification. Since Being is manifested in each of these realms, it is not distinct from any one of them rather it is identical with them. This identity is in accordance with the existential capacity of the recipient, not the absoluteness of the Essence, as the hadith states, "There was God and nothing else was with Him,"[7] the Essence is behind an impenetrable veil, independent of all manifestation. However, manifestation occurs in a succession of descent (*tanazzulāt*) from the highest degree of the exclusive Singularity to the lowest form of prime matter.

Just as the divine names "receive" from the Essence and "bestow" upon the Archetypes, the Archetypes "receive" from the divine names and "bestow" upon the external entities. Qayṣarī says:

> Permanent Archetypes have two aspects: They are the forms of divine names and the realities of external entities. In the former, they are like bodies for spirits, and in the latter, they are like spirits for bodies.
>
> The divine names also have two aspects: An aspect of their unity with the Essence and an aspect of their multiplicity. With respect to their multiplicity, they are in need of emanation from the divine Presence that comprehends them, and a recipient such as the world.[8]

However, the Archetypes remain in the realm of the Unseen, for they are governed by the names the Hidden and the First and do not partake in existence; they remain in the state of sheer potentiality. Entities in the external world are their manifestations and are consequently governed by the names, the Last and the Manifest.

Quiddities

Quiddities are conceptual and not real, in the same way that Permanent Archetypes are "concepts" in the divine knowledge and do not possess real existence. If they did possess real existence, then even the impossible things would be considered real, which is absurd. What is meant by "real" is that which exhibits effects in the external world. Qayṣarī writes:

> Being manifests through attributes, each manifestation becoming individuated and distinguished from another by some of its attributes and each reality becomes a reality of the divine names. The forms of those realities in the divine knowledge are called quiddities, or Permanent Archetypes.[9]

Since the Permanent Archetypes have not appeared in external existence they cannot be considered as being created or formed (*majʿūla*), just as ideas in the mind or imagination are not considered real until they appear in the external world. This is also the reason why the philosophers call the Permanent Archetypes quiddities, since quiddity possesses neither existence nor non-existence. Qayṣarī writes:

> The Permanent Archetypes, being that they are intellectual forms, cannot be described as being "formed" (*majʿūla*), because they are non-existent externally and whatever is formed has existence, just as intellectual and imaginal forms in our minds cannot be described as being formed so long as they do not exist externally.[10]

As mentioned, quiddities do not have real existence in the external world, but they do possess intellectual existence. They possess real existence on the plane of divine knowledge since God's knowledge is identical with His Essence. The Sufis have preferred to name the objects of divine knowledge as the Permanent Archetypes instead of quiddities because the latter are only realized through existence while the former are ontological realities that are identical with the reality of Being. That which exists in the external world is quiddity and existence. The former is conceptual and extrapolated, and the latter is real and possesses effects.

However, the Permanent Archetypes are ontological realities that have existence insofar as divine knowledge is one with Essence. This leads to an important distinction between external existence and intellectual existence on the plane of divine knowledge. In particular, quiddities do not have real existence in the external world except through existence, whereas on the plane of divine knowledge, quiddity and existence are unified. This is because multiplicity is effaced in the ascending degrees of Being.

The ontological status of the Permanent Archetypes is superior to that of the quiddities contemplated in the mind, for it is possible to conceive of a thing without its realization in the external world. Whereas the Permanent Archetypes are ontological realities on the plane of divine knowledge, they are not without their effects in the Intellectual, Imaginal World and physical worlds. Just as the divine attributes exist on the plane of Unity and have real existence, affecting every subordinate degree of Being, the Permanent Archetypes possess a form of existence in every subordinate degree of Being. Quiddities in the mind of a perceiver, however, are the least form of existence, since they only exist as mental existence. If those concepts find realization in the external world, it is existence that produces those effects and not the quiddities themselves.

Since the divine names are realities that do not possess form in and of themselves, it is only through the divine theophany on the plane of knowledge that they possess form. Yet, since they are intellectual in nature, "form" is applied only metaphorically because God's knowledge is identical to His

Essence. Therefore, the term individuation (*taʿayyun*) is more appropriate for the Permanent Archetypes and "form" is more appropriate for external entities. Just as the divine names are considered divine perfections on the plane of Unity, the Permanent Archetypes are divine perfections in the presence of divine knowledge. Qayṣarī writes:

> The forms of quiddities in our mind are shadows of the forms in [divine] knowledge that occur in us reflecting their sublime origins, or the manifestation of the light of Being in us, according to our share in that [divine] Presence.
>
> For this reason, it is difficult to obtain knowledge of the realities of things, as they truly are, except by one whose heart is illuminated by the light of God and the veil between him and pure Being is lifted. Consequently, through God he perceives those forms of [divine] knowledge as they truly are.[11]

God's Knowledge of the World

Debating the nature of God's knowledge of particulars, some of the philosophers held that God's knowledge is identical with the First Intellect, saying that God's knowledge of His Essence is identical with His Essence, and His knowledge of contingent entities consists of the existence of the First Intellect together with forms subsisting within it.[12] The Sufis refute this position saying that the First Intellect is itself contingent, originated and preceded by essential non-existence. It is itself an object of God's knowledge and therefore other than the reality of His knowledge. Qayṣarī writes:

> The First Intellect—being that it is contingent and originated—is preceded by essential non-being, and known [only] by God, since whatever is not known cannot be endowed with existence. Knowledge of it necessarily precedes its coming into being. Therefore, it is other than Him, and its quiddity is necessarily other than the reality of [His] knowledge.[13]

Qayṣarī admits that the view of the philosophers is partially admissible on the grounds that God's knowledge is identical with the First Intellect insofar as His knowledge pervades all creation. He knows realities and universal meanings in summary form and that manifestations are identical with the Manifest. This is equivalent to saying His knowledge "descends" to the degree of the First Intellect.

This position is still problematic because unlike the First Intellect, divine knowledge is a singular reality that has three aspects: The first aspect is that God has intrinsic knowledge of His Essence; the second is that knowledge is an attribute relative to the Essence, because God is the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*);

the third is that it is an attribute relative to an object, such as His knowledge of the contingent. Nevertheless, these divisions are conceptual while the reality of the divine knowledge is singular despite these divisions, and God knows the contingent as He knows His Essence. These distinctions do not apply to the First Intellect and are not contained in the quiddity of the First Intellect.

Qayṣarī also argues that if the First Intellect is identical with God's knowledge, it would entail that it is also identical with His power, for God has power over all things. Based on this, it would be more appropriate to say that the First Intellect is identical with His power. However, the philosophers maintain that God has power over all things, including particulars, whereas His knowledge encompasses particulars only by way of the First Intellect. The reply is that just as He has power over particulars through His Essence, He also knows them through His Essence, not by means of the First Intellect.

It cannot be said the First Intellect, and consequently His knowledge is "present" before Him since that which is "present" is other than Him, whereas His knowledge is an essential attribute for His Essence and not other than it. Since the First Intellect is contingent and originated, and the divine knowledge is intrinsic to the Essence, God's knowledge precedes the First Intellect and is the source for its origination; otherwise, the Essence would be in need of the very thing that arises from it: the attribute of knowledge.

If it is said that His knowledge is identical with the First Intellect in the same way that the divine Ipseity permeates all existence, then His knowledge must be identical with the First Intellect, the Universal Soul, and every other descending degree of Being.

The philosophers maintain that the First Intellect and other entities are effects of God and distinct from Him, but the gnostic sees the oneness of Being and its pervasiveness, especially with respect to the sublime attributes of the Essence. They view multiplicity as the theophany of Being, and the locus of theophany is identical to the One who reveals Himself in it. For this reason, divine knowledge is all-encompassing: "Not an atom's weight escapes your Lord, in the earth or in the sky" (10:61).

The distinction between knowledge, knower and the known is only conceptual. Thus, it can be said that at times, knowledge is subsequent to its object, and at other times, it is not—since it is conceived only in relation to its object. Divine knowledge is independent of its objects because knowledge belonging to the Essence precedes them and is not dependent on contingent existence. Qayṣarī concludes this section by saying:

> He perceives the realities of things in the way that He perceives the reality of His own Essence, but not by another faculty such as the First Intellect, etc., since these realities are actually identical to His Essence, even if they are other than Him by way of individuation.[14]

Notes

1 Professor Al-Majid makes a subtle point here saying that Essence qua Essence has no knowledge of itself. Since it is sheer Being, no attribute can be applied to it, even knowledge. How can a thing which is absolute and undetermined be the object of knowledge or perception, even of itself?
2 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:136 (I 90.23).
3 Chittick coins the term "entification" which captures the idea of "becoming an entity." I have chosen to use the word "Archetype" to differentiate between the entities in the external world and those in the divine knowledge, which have not yet entered existence.
4 Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, *Risālat al-nuṣūṣ fī taḥqīq al-ṭawr al-makhṣūṣ* (Beirut, 2008), 74.
5 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 11.
6 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 93.
7 This hadith is often translated as "God is and there is nothing else with Him," since, as Ibn al-ʿArabī explains, "The verb *kān* does not denote temporality, but denotes existence." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:57 (II 56.6).
8 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 103.
9 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 107.
10 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 103.
11 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 109.
12 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 85.
13 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 85.
14 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 39.

4 The Origin of Multiplicity

God manifests Himself in ontological degrees or planes of manifestation. The exclusive Singularity is the degree of Being in which all multiplicity is effaced and is the first individuation (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*) which includes all the potential modes of Being. The divine names emanate from the exclusive Singularity through the Holiest Emanation (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) to the inclusive Unity, the degree of Being that embraces the divine names with respect to their infinite ontological realities. Then through the Holy Emanation (*al-fayḍ al-muqaddaṣ*), the divine names manifest the Permanent Archetypes (*al-aʿyān al-thābita*), which are essences in the divine knowledge. Since the Singularity has no multiplicity, it is at the degree of Unity that the Permanent Archetypes emerge, embracing the myriad objects of creation.

The Permanent Archetypes are considered the first degree of multiplicity since the divine names are conceptually distinct realities on the plane of Unity. Qayṣarī writes:

> From one point of view, multiplicity originates in knowledge [intrinsic] to the Essence (*al-ʿilm al-dhātī*), because God's knowledge of His Essence through His Essence presupposes the knowledge of its perfections at the degree of Singularity. Then divine love necessitates the manifestation of the Essence through each attribute, becoming individuated on the plane of knowledge, then in external existence where it acquires multiplicity.[1]

The Permanent Archetypes can be viewed as an isthmus between the divine names and the external entities. Qayṣarī says:

> These forms emanate from the divine Essence by the Holiest Emanation (*al-fayḍ al-aqdas*) and the first theophany, by means of essential love and the Keys of the Unseen (*mafātīḥ al-ghayb*)—which none knows but He—seeking their manifestation and perfection.[2]

Although Being is classified according to various typologies, it is but a single emanation, as in the words of the Qurʾān, "He who created the heavens in

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layers; you will not see in the creation of the Merciful any discrepancy. Look again, do you see any rift?" (67:3).

The Permanent Archetypes possess receptivity from the divine names and the external entities possess receptivity from the Permanent Archetypes, as mentioned by Ibn al-ʿArabī in the first chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, "The recipient is only due to the Holiest Emanation."[3] However, activity and receptivity exist between the degrees of existence as well as within a specific degree. Some of the divine names are active in relation to others, such as the Mothers of the Names and the Universal Names in relation to the Daughters of the Names[4] and Particular Names.

Unity within multiplicity

The proponents of philosophical Sufism posit the oneness of Being, which expresses the essential unity of Being in the multiplicity of created existence or unity within multiplicity. The rational mind fathoms God's unity, as established in the declaration, "There is no god but God." However, only through the light of faith does one resolve the paradox of unity within divine multiplicity to which the Qurʾān subtly alludes, "He is God in the heavens and on the earth" (6:3). Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> The believer is one who acknowledges the unity within divine multiplicity given that it contains the Most Beautiful Names and diverse properties, insofar as each name signifies the Essence and a meaning that is not signified by any other name. God is One in Himself, so the believer also has faith in this unity, just as he has faith in the unity within the multiplicity.[5]

Multiplicity of contingent existence is not imaginary, but the real manifestations of Being. God becomes manifest through His engendering of things while still remaining hidden in them, as Imām ʿAlī says, "He is in all things but not by being contained within them and separate from all things but not by being isolated from them."[6] The human being also has a manifest and hidden aspect. The manifest refers to the mineral, vegetal and animal aspects, while the hidden refers to the various degrees of the spirit: the soul, imagination, intellect and heart. Both manifest and hidden aspects refer to the same individual.

Just as it is not possible for unitary Being to be removed from the multiplicity of its individuals, it is not possible for essences to be removed from their individuals despite the disparity of specific attributes. Therefore, the disparity of individuals is not in Being qua Being. Similarly, even if the planes of existence are distinct realities, they are not separate from Being itself. Both perspectives must be held in order to grasp the seemingly contradictory relation between unity and multiplicity, which Āmulī explains in the following section:

> The example of Being and its manifestations in its forms is like the manifestation of ink in the form of letters. Just as the appearance of letters in the ink does not compromise the integrity of its oneness and the unity of its reality, similarly, the manifestation of Being in the forms of entities does not compromise the integrity of its oneness and unity.
>
> Having established this, then real unity in both forms—the form of the ink and the letters, and the forms of entities within Being—exists by virtue of disregarding the multiplicity of forms in their manifestations, and that is by seeing the reality of each. One beholds the unity in the form of ink and letters by ignoring the forms of the letters, their individuations and multiplicity. That occurs by seeing the reality of the ink, in and of itself, because the existence of the letters is conceptual (*iʿtibārī*), as they have no independent existence externally; only the ink has external existence.
>
> Unity with respect to Being and the entities is analogous. It occurs by disregarding their forms, individuations and multiplicity. This is witnessing Being, in and of itself, regarding the existence of the entities as conceptual and having no external existence—in reality, what exists externally is only God (*al-ḥaqq*).[7]

Unity within multiplicity can also be explained using the metaphor of the sun and its rays. In the same way that rays emanate from the sun, existence emanates from a single source. The sun's rays are not separate entities from the sun but are conceptually distinct from it as they display individual properties. The closer one is to the sun, the greater the intensity of the rays and the fewer distinctions between them, until the rays and the sun become one. Similarly, each degree of Being is either colored by multiplicity in relation to the degree above it or unified in relation to the degree below it. That which is ontologically higher possesses greater unity, comprehensiveness, activity and governance.

Division of the Contingent

The contingent is divided into the possible and the impossible. The latter is further subdivided into those that may be conceived rationally but are not realized in the worlds, and those that are never realized externally because they are eternally hidden in the absolute Unseen; they are the names referred to by the Prophet as the "Reserved Names" (*al-asmāʾ al-mustaʾthara*) known only to God.[8]

The first type is the hypothetical contingent which has no reality either in the mind or in external existence, such as the joining of both sides of a contradiction, as it is impossible to conceive that a thing can simultaneously exist and not exist in the same place. These are hypothetical propositions that have no referent either in the mind or in external reality; they belong to the category of non-being. Even if one can entertain its

concept in the mind, it is still considered non-being, because what exists in the mind is a hypothetical concept not the thing itself; by definition, it is impossible to conceive.

As for the impossible contingents in the absolute Unseen, they are impossible because they can never appear in the manifest realm. Impossibility is ascribed to them because their essences seek the Hidden and flee from the Manifest, even though they exist as particular forms of intellectual divine realities on the plane of divine knowledge. There is no possible contingent entity that seeks its manifestation in the external world and does not receive it. If some entities were to receive existence over others, it would undermine God's essential magnanimity, which gives all things its due. It would, therefore, result in the quiddity preponderating towards non-existence while its reality necessitates existence.

Substance and Accident

The contingent can also be divided into substance and accident. The philosophers define substance as an external entity that does not inhere in a locus and accident as that which inheres in a locus.[9] Substances are either simple immaterial entities, such as spirits, intellects and souls, or simple material entities such as elements or compounds. Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers use the terms "substance" and "accident" to explain multiplicity originating from unity in the first level of contingency. The Sufis consider those divine realities that abide in themselves, such as the divine names, as Substance. Accordingly, they are not a part of the contingent realm. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> The heavens are the higher world, and the earth is the lower world. There is only the high and the low, which are of two types—a world that abides through itself, and a world that does not abide through itself. What abides through itself is substances and bodies. What does not abide through itself is qualities and colors, which are attributes and accidents. The worlds of bodies and substances do not subsist except through the existence of accidents within them.[10]

Qayṣarī defines substance as the reality of Being, even if Being qua Being is neither substance nor accident. Thus, Substance is uncreated and prior to the First Intellect, which is the first created entity:

> [All] substances are united in the quintessence of Substance, as such, which is a single reality, and it is the manifestation of the divine Essence, with respect to its universally sustaining nature and reality, in the same way that accidents are manifestations of the names that are subordinate to the Essence. Do you not see that the divine Essence remains veiled by the names? Likewise, substance remains enveloped in accidents.[11]

Since every form in the world is an accident for Substance and both Substance and accident are the forms of manifestation of the Essence, it is through the individuation of the divine Breath that these realities are formed and enter into existence. Qayṣarī says:

> Just as the Essence through association with an attribute becomes a [divine] name, be it universal or particular, similarly, Substance, through the association of a universal meaning becomes a specific substance and a manifestation of a specific name from among the Universal Names; rather it is identical with it.
>
> […] This reality in the terminology of God's Folk, is called the Breath of the Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*), and the universal prime matter (*al-hayūla al-kulliyya*),[12] and that which becomes individuated and enters existence is called the divine words (*al-kalimāt al-ilāhiyya*).[13]

The relationships between the divine names, such as their engendering, combining and governance are applied to the reality of Substance as well. This is because there is no disjunction between the descending degrees of creation, as realities emanate from a single source, like rays emanating from the sun. Substance is united with the particular substances, just as the universal divine names are united with particular names. Substances are differentiated from each other by the accidents that accompany them and accidents are the manifestations of their attributes in the form of the entities. Qaysārī says:

> Just as combined universal names engender other names, combined simple substances engender other substances of which they comprise. Just as some names encompass other names, some substances encompass others. Just as the Mothers of the Names are finite, the genera of substances and their species are finite. Just as the branches of the names are infinite, the entities are likewise infinite.[14]

Just as the Essence is veiled by the attributes and names, the Substantial reality is enveloped by accidents and therefore veiled by them. The Sufis refer to a universal prime matter that differs from the prime matter (*al-hayūla al-ūla*) held by the philosophers. The former is the highest degree in the contingent realm and the latter is the lowest degree, although both possess complete potentiality.

Furthermore, Substance is immaterial while universal prime matter is pure matter. Substance, which is the manifestation of the Essence, is identical with simple and compound genera and is the reality of realities. Simple genera are the Intellects and spirits since they are non-compound, whereas minerals plants and animals are composed of matter and form. Substance originates from the world of the Unseen and manifests in each realm of existence as each contingent entity is individuated through its particular accidents. While

it can be said that matter and form are united, substance does not unite with its particulars in the same way. Qayṣarī writes:

> [Substance] is a singular essence with respect to itself, but multiple with respect to its manifestations in its attributes, which, with respect to their realities, are concomitant with that essence, although, with respect to their manifestation, they depend on a balance that it has in actuality.[15]

Substance is united with its particulars through manifestation, just as the divine attributes are manifestations of the Essence, or in the way that the Permanent Archetypes are manifestations of the Essence on the plane of divine knowledge. Thus, there is a mutual necessitation between substance and accident. There are those that exist on the plane of divine knowledge and those that exist in the external world.

Expansive Being

The term Expansive Being (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*) also describes original manifestation. It is the shadow (*al-ẓill*) of the Essence and the origin of individuation through the Holiest Emanation. It can also refer to the Holy Emanation, or the Breath of the Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*).[16] It is the first individuation arising from the degree of Singularity, which is the inward aspect of the Holy Emanation.[17] Qayṣarī writes:

> Expansive Being (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*) that expands over the Permanent Archetypes in the [divine] knowledge is a shadow of the [Essence] since it is qualified by generality. Similarly, both mental and external existence are shadows of that shadow due to the compounding of limitations, referred to by the verse, "Have you not seen how your Lord has extended the shadow, and if He had so willed, He would have made it stationary?" (24:45).[18]

External existence is the shadow of the Permanent Archetypes, which is the shadow of the divine names. Each successive individuation is a shadow of its preceding degree. The term "shadow" refers relative existence, as Kāshānī writes:

> The shadow is relative existence manifest in the individuation of contingent entities, the properties of which are non-existent. They become manifest through the name the Light, which is external existence that is attributed to them. So external light that is reflected from their forms covers the darkness of their non-being and becomes a shadow, because a shadow appears from light and its very absence.[19]

Since the Singularity is the first individuation or the degree in which particulars are unified, the Unity is the particularized form of that union. Therefore, Expansive Being is the second individuation in which the particulars of

the Permanent Archetypes are brought forth. From one perspective, it is the outer aspect of the degree of Singularity and the inner aspect of the Permanent Archetypes, in the way that the breath of the human being is the isthmus between ideas and words.

Expansive Being is also called Substance, the shadow of the Essence, the First Engenderer (*al-ṣādir al-awwal*), the Outstretched Parchment (*al-riqq al-manshūr*), the Muḥammadan Light. Qayṣarī, commenting on the *Fuṣūṣ* says, "If the Breath of the Merciful is realized externally and determined, it is called Substance."[20] The First Engenderer is not the First Intellect, rather it is superior to it because the former is uncreated and the latter is created, as the hadith mentions, "The first thing that God created was the Intellect."[21] The First Engenderer is considered antecedent and the First Intellect is considered subsequent, or substance and accident, respectively. Thus, all entities, which are the words of God, originate from Expansive Being or the Breath of the Merciful.

The Breath of the Merciful

Ibn al-ʿArabī and his followers consider all divine perfections and their corresponding ontological realities as divine words (*al-kalimāt al-ilāhiyya*) originating from the Breath of the Merciful (*al-nafas al-raḥmānī*). It is called the Breath of the Merciful because the breath symbolizes a state of unity through which words and meanings are engendered, in the same way that words are produced through the breath of a person.[22] Just as the mind expresses ideas through words formed by the breath, the objects of creation—which include the angels, heavens, earth and all that they contain—emerge from the divine knowledge into actual existence through the Breath of the Merciful. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> God described Himself as having a Breath, and it is the emergence from the Unseen as the manifestation of letters in the Visible. The letters are containers for meanings, while the meanings are their spirits.[23]

Ibn al-ʿArabī relates the Breath to the Cloud (*ʿamā*), which is mentioned in a hadith when the Prophet was asked, "Where was our Lord before He created the creatures?" He replied, "He came to be in a Cloud, neither above which nor below which was any air."[24] Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The Cloud derives from His breathing, while the forms, which are the worlds, derive from the word, 'Be!'"[25] Then he says, "The entities become manifest within the Breath of the Merciful, just as letters become manifest within the human breath,"[26] that is, "the breath becomes manifest and identified by letters and words. It does not become manifest through anything superadded to the inward but is identical with the inward."[27]

The Breath also relates to divine name the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), since the verse states, "My Mercy encompasses all things" (7:156). Since words appear

only through the breath, the Breath of the Merciful encompasses all existence. This is why the name, the Merciful, is mentioned directly after the name *Allah* in the verse, "Call upon *Allah* or call upon the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), whichever one you call upon, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names" (17:110). Farghānī describes it as the first individuation (*al-taʿayyun al-awwal*):[28]

> The first thing that becomes individuated and manifest from the absolute Unseen is the divine Breath of the Merciful. This is one reality within which are contained the property of activity (*fiʿl*) and effectivity (*taʾthīr*) as well as receptivity (*qabūl*) and reactivity (*infiʿāl*). God's names, attributes and acts are contained within it. This is to say that on the first level, which is identical with His true oneness, the knower, knowledge and known, the agent, receptacle and act are all a single thing, without distinction or difference. Then on the second level, the entity of the Merciful Breath becomes determined and manifest from the absolute Unseen.[29]

The Breath of the Merciful also refers to the Holy Emanation, which emanates from the Holiest Emanation. It is also the first individuation arising from the degree of Singularity, which is the inner aspect of the Holy Emanation.[30]

Divine Words

Since the Breath of the Merciful is the fabric of existence and the divine words (*al-kalimāt al-ilāhiyya*) are the entities of creation, the first word that God uttered is "Be!" (*kun*), Ibn al-ʿArabī describes:

> He originated all things from the hidden depths of the mystery of this word, "Be!" (*kun*) … for God says, "Our only word to a thing We desire is to say to it 'Be!' and it is" (16:40). When I look at the world and creation, the hidden and the written, I find that the world is but a tree whose original light is from the seed of "Be!" through which He fertilized the existential *kāf*.[31]

Describing the subsequent order of creation, Ibn al-ʿArabī says in the *Futūḥāt*:

> He engendered the form of "Be!" from the Breath, then He engendered the creation from "Be!" So, He manifested all the words from "Be!", which is the word signifying the existential command, and He did not manifest anything from it except compound letters that correspond to it, gathering in "Be!" insofar as they are words.[32]
>
> […] All scriptures and revealed books proceed from this Presence, that which God dictates to the Supreme Pen (*al-qalam al-aʿlā*) what it should

> inscribe on the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*). The speech of the whole world, both the Unseen and the manifest, is from this Presence—and all is the speech of God—for this is the First Presence.[33]

According to Kāshānī, "word" refers to "reality, essence, Permanent Archetype or any other individuation of God."[34] The existential words of God, then, are the heavens and the earth, the sun and the moon, and all created existence. In the hadith literature, we have mention of the Complete Word (*al-kalimat al-tāmma*), a reality that encompasses all the names in their totality and does not follow any other name. Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq mentions the Complete Word and the Reserved Names (*al-asmāʾ al-mustaʾthara*) in the following enigmatic description of the divine names:

> God Almighty created the names through letters that do not possess an utterance, through a word that is not spoken, through a figure that is not corporeal, through an allegory that is indescribable, through a color that has no tint, negating all notions of dimension, far removed from limits, veiled from the senses of the imagination, concealed but not hidden.
>
> He engendered the Complete Word (*al-kalimat al-tāmma*) simultaneously into four parts and manifested three divine names without their being attached to creation, and one, He kept hidden; it is the hidden and the reserved (*al-mustaʾthara*). So, these were the names that God, Almighty manifested, who then established for each [name] four pillars, making them twelve in total.
>
> They are the Merciful, Beneficent, Sovereign, Holy, Creator, Originator, Shaper, Living, Eternal, One who neither sleeps nor rests, Omniscient, Aware, Hearing, Seeing, Wise, Mighty, Sublime, Lofty, Great, Able, Powerful, Peace, Faithful, Awe-inspiring, Originator, High, Mighty, Generous, Provider, Life-giver, Life-taker, Causer, Inheritor. These are the thirty Names.[35]

In the microcosm, "word" refers to the Supreme Spirit, and specifically the perfect humans such as the prophets Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad as the Qurʾān states, "O Mary, God gives you the good news of a Word from Him whose name is Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, distinguished in the world and the hereafter, and one who was brought near to God" (3:45). Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> Know that existent beings are the words of God which do not cease. God said with respect to Jesus, "His Word which He has cast into Mary" (4:171). For this reason, we say that existent beings are the words of God. Words are customarily known through the arrangement of letters in the breath of one who articulates them.[36]

The prophets are the words of God because their realities combine every material and spiritual existential plane, and God ennobled Jesus by calling

him the Word, as "God's word is the highest, and God is Mighty, Wise" (9:40).[37]

Qayṣarī writes, "As for the [Spirit] being the 'Word', it is because of its manifesting in the Breath of the Merciful, like the word manifesting in human breath."[38] It also refers to the rational soul since it is through the rational soul that man produces words. These words are produced by the breath of the human being and representative of man's true nature, as the various hadith indicate, "Speech is the scale of the human being,"[39] "The speech of a man is the measure of his intellect,"[40] "Man is hidden under his tongue,"[41] and "Your speech is the translator of your intellect."[42] Jāmī defines "word" in the context of the *Fuṣūṣ*, since each *kalima* refers to the essential reality of a prophet:

> What is meant by the word (*kalima*) of each prophet is the path and qualities that God has specified for him and his community. In the mystical tradition, it is the form of the letter arising from the Breath of the Merciful. As such, every entity is a word of God, as He mentions, "Say, 'If the sea were ink for the words of my Lord, the sea would be exhausted before the words of my Lord were exhausted' (18:109)." The entities, therefore, are read as the words of God because they resemble words in human speech. The entities become determined in the Breath of the Merciful, which is the expansion of Being and its extension by passing through its degrees, in the same way that [words] acquire form in human breath through its articulations.[43]

Each divine book or scripture is the breath (*nafas*, pl. *anfās*) of that particular prophet to whom it was revealed. On the one hand, revelation is God's directive for that prophet and his nation, and on the other, it is the reality corresponding to that prophet's spirit, like the receptivity a lock has to its key.

The Intellect

There are divine levels and created levels in the descending degrees of Being. In the latter, the first form in existence mentioned in the hadith is called the Intellect,[44] "The first thing that God created was the Intellect."[45] The term "Intellect" has a broader scope in Sufism than in the standard philosophical works.

> The theoretical intellect (*al-ʿaql al-naẓarī*) of the Islamic philosophers is no longer that of Aristotle although his very terminology is translated into Arabic … The subtle change that took place from the Greek idea of the "intellect" (*nous*) to the Islamic view of the intellect (*al-ʿaql*) can also be seen much earlier in the works of even the Islamic Peripatetics such as Ibn Sīna where the Active Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-faʿʿāl*) is equated with the Holy Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-qudus*).[46]

According to the hadith, the Intellect was the first thing in creation, founded on the principle of divine unity, forged with the perfections and potentialities of all things by virtue of its proximity to God. Describing the primacy of the Intellect, Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq said:

> God created the Intellect, and it was the first creation among the spiritual beings, proceeding from His light from the right side of the divine Throne. He said to it, "Retreat!" so it retreated. Then He said, "Approach!" so it approached. Then He said, "I have created a great creature and ennobled it above all My creation."[47]

It was ennobled by being the exclusive object of the divine gaze and the exclusive witness to divine unity, since there was nothing besides it in existence. It is reported that the Prophet said:

> God created the Intellect from a hidden, treasured light in His ancient knowledge, of which neither a sent messenger nor a proximate angel had any awareness. He made knowledge its soul, understanding its spirit, abstinence its head, modesty its eyes, wisdom its tongue, compassion its concern, mercy its heart. Then He adorned it and strengthened it with ten things: certainty, faith, truthfulness, serenity, sincerity, companionship, generosity, contentment, submission and gratitude. Then He commanded it to go back so the Intellect went back. Then God commanded it to draw near, so it drew near. Then He said, "Speak!" It said, "Praise be to God who does not have an opposite, nor equal, nor similar, nor equal, nor substitute, nor equivalent, before whom all things are humble and abased."
>
> God, the Almighty said, "By My Might and Majesty, I have not created anything better than you, nor more obedient to me, nor loftier, nor nobler nor more honorable than you. By you I impose, I bestow, I am acknowledged as One, worshipped, called upon, hoped for, yearned for, feared and warned against. Reward is through you and punishment is through you."[48]

The Intellect also refers to the Muḥammadan Light, as in the hadith, "The first thing that God created was my light,"[49] which is the first emanation of the divine names. It is also called the world of Invincibility (*al-jabarūt*) due to its intensity and strength.[50] The First Intellect and the Universal Soul are the forms of the Mother of the Book and the Permanent Archetypes. Whatever exists in the Universal Soul exists in the First Intellect, but in the form of particulars. The Universal Soul is called the Manifest Book, revealing and individuating the hidden, unified realities of the First Intellect. The Universal Body that relates to temporal existence is the form of the Universal Soul. Thus, it is called the Book of Effacement and Establishment (*al-maḥw wa-l-ithbāt*), since objects contained within it are mutable given the variable nature of the

temporal world. Furthermore, this book is connected to individual forms and their states rather than universals since universals are fixed.

Because the First Intellect is the supreme being in the order of creation, it is pure, noble and simple. Thus, it has been called the White Pearl, as Kāshānī explains in *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*:

> The White Pearl is the First Intellect. It is called so because it is the most intensely simple and pure entity. Therefore, it is without color, as the hadith states, "The first thing that God created was the Intellect and the first thing that He created was the White Pearl." Since the First Intellect is the highest, supreme and noblest of all contingent entities, it is called the White Pearl. This is because the pearl is the highest, supreme and noblest gem of the sea. The pearl is a heavenly drop of water that falls from the sky into the salty sea, absolutely pure from any earthly contamination. The oyster receives and transforms it, and it is formed in the sea according to the specific receptivity of the oyster. Likewise, the Intellect is like the receptive oyster of contingency, receiving the water of life that flows from the sea of Necessity, carried by the air of the Breath of the Merciful and arising from the empyrean of Lordship. The First Intellect, existentially, is the pearl of the sea of Necessity whose origin is the water of life from the Breath of the Merciful. It is also the pearl in the sea of contingency from the perspective that there is existential unity among realities in the manifestation of entities. It is white, which is the best color and the nearest in relation to light. That is why the soul is called the Emerald and the Red Ruby, since red, green and all colors besides white and black are an isthmus, just as the soul is an isthmus between the intellect and nature.[51]

The Pen and the Tablet

The Sufis employ the term the Supreme Pen, or simply the Pen to denote the Intellect. Having received directly from God, the Pen is the active principle in existence that writes on the tablet of creation. The Qurʾān states, "He taught by the Pen; He taught man what he knew not" (96:4–5), and "*Nūn*, by the Pen and what they inscribe" (68:1). The Prophet said, "The first thing that God created was the Pen, then God said, 'Write My knowledge in My creation and write all that exists,'"[52] and in another version, "Write the measuring out. So, it wrote what would be until the Day of Resurrection."[53] He also said, "It is a Pen of light whose length is the distance between the heaven and the earth."[54] Both Pen and Tablet have a dual nature, an active and a receptive aspect, as Qūnawī describes:

> Since the world is a shadow of the divine Presence … the attention of the divine Singularity turned to engendering the "world of Writing and Inscription" upon the Permanent Archetypes after the manifestation of

> the Enraptured Ones[55]… So that divine attention resulted in a singular ontological effect which embraces an unseen relational multiplicity. God named it a "Pen" and an "Intellect."
>
> With respect to the face turned toward its Lord, the Intellect receives His bestowal and assistance. With respect to being the first determined entity, it perceives its own self and those who are distinguished from it, and the characteristics through which it becomes distinguished from others, in contrast to those who precede it in degree, the Enraptured Ones.
>
> God called it a "Pen" in respect to its face turned toward the creation, so it exercises effects and assists it. The Pen holds the unseen undifferentiated multiplicity that is found in its own essence in order to differentiate what manifests from it through some degree or another.[56]

When God turned His gaze towards the Pen, it received knowledge in summary form which it imparted to the Tablet in differentiated form. Jīlī says:

> It is called the First Intellect because it is the first essence to accept existence from its Lord, the first to perceive its Lord and accept the emanation of His Being. The Intellect is the vessel for the shape of divine knowledge because it is the Supreme Pen. Thereafter, knowledge descends to the Guarded Tablet. It is the undifferentiated form of the Tablet which is its elaboration.[57]

The Supreme Pen is the Mother of the Book to which the Qurʾān refers, "It is with us in the Mother of the Book, sublime and wise" (43:4). It relates to other macrocosmic realities, as Qayṣarī writes:

> If [Being] is conditioned only by the universals of all things, it is the degree of the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), the Lord of the First Intellect (*rabb al-ʿaql al-awwal*), which is also called the Tablet of Decree (*lawḥ al-qaḍāʾ*), the Mother of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*), and the Supreme Pen (*al-qalam al-aʿlā*).[58]

As "the Glorious Qurʾān is on a Guarded Tablet" (85:21–22), the Sufis refer to the Guarded Tablet as the Manifest Book, the Universal Soul, and the place where the decree of the Supreme Pen appears. It signifies the theophany of God's light in the reflection of creation, the tablet upon which entities are imprinted. Qūnawī says, "The multiplicity that the Cloud embraces manifests on the Tablet through which the divine name the Distinguisher (*al-mufaṣṣil*) becomes realized, just as the name the Director (*al-mudabbir*) becomes realized through the Pen insofar as it possesses comprehensiveness and singularity."[59]

The Tablet is the mother of prime matter because a form only appears if there is an impression of it already on the Guarded Tablet. The Supreme Pen

engenders forms on the Guarded Tablet according to the requisites of prime matter. Qayṣarī writes:

> If [Being] is conditioned by universals in them as permanent particulars, without any veil from their universals, it is the degree of the Compassionate (*al-raḥīm*), the Lord of the Universal Soul (*al-nafs al-kulliyya*), also called the Tablet of Destiny (*lawḥ al-qadr*), the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maḥfūẓ*), and the Manifest Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*).[60]

Given that the First Intellect receives directly from God, it is also considered a Tablet. Kāshānī the describes the various tablets in the following passage:

> There are four Tablets: The Tablet of Decree (*al-lawḥ al-qaḍāʾ*), which is the Tablet of the First Intellect (*al-lawḥ al-ʿaql al-awwal*) and prior to the Tablet of Effacement and Establishment (*al-lawḥ al-maḥw wa-l-ithbāt*). The Tablet of Destiny (*al-lawḥ al-qadr*) is the Tablet of the Universal Rational Soul (*al-lawḥ al-nafs al-nāṭiqa al-kulliyya*). It differentiates the universals of the first Tablet being associated with their causes; it is also called the Guarded Tablet (*al-lawḥ al-maʾfūẓ*). The Tablet of the Particular Celestial Soul (*al-lawḥ al-nafs al-juzʾiyya al-samāwiyya*) is the Tablet upon which there is an inscription of everything in this world along with its shape, condition, and measure; it is called the "heaven of this world." It is like the imagination of the world, just as the first [Tablet] is like its spirit, and the second [Tablet] is like its heart. Thereafter, the Tablet of [prime] matter receives forms of the visible world. God knows best.[61]

The microcosmic Pen and Tablet are the active and receptive principles in the human being, or the intellect and soul, as Ibn al-ʿArabī describes:

> When God created this First Intellect as a Pen, it desired through its own reality a place of its effect through writing, being that it is a Pen. From this desire arose the Guarded Tablet, which is the Soul. Thus, the Tablet was the first originated entity to arise from something originated, since it arose from the desire existing in the Pen …
>
> The Intellect casts upon the Soul, recording and arranging everything within it until the Day of Resurrection. This was the third existent entity, whose degree was between the Tablet and the Pen, coming after the Tablet.[62]

The Tablet also refers to the heart, since the intellect inscribes knowledge upon the heart, or God inscribes faith upon the heart. Fayḍ Kāshānī says:

> The realities of all things are inscribed on the Guarded Tablet and flow upon our hearts from that world by the pen of the Intellect, which is the

> writer on the tablet of our souls, as God says, "He has inscribed faith upon their hearts" (58:22), and "He taught by the Pen; taught man what he knew not" (96:4–5) … All knowledge can be inscribed on the human heart. It is like a mirror that is prepared to reflect every reality of Truth arising from the Guarded Tablet. It is free to receive every type of knowledge, unless there is some essential deficiency like a child's heart, which is akin to a crude image on unpolished steel.[63]

The Prophet states that the Pen, Tablet and divine Throne are created from a single light. "When God wished to create the creation, he divided Light into four parts and from the first made the Pen, from the second the Tablet, from the third the Throne, then He divided the fourth into four parts."[64] Each of these three realities relates to knowledge, which is the first brick God laid in the edifice of creation.

The Throne and Pedestal

One of the recurring images in the Qurʾān, hadith literature and the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī is the Throne (*al-ʿarsh*) and Pedestal (*kursī*). The Qurʾān states, "The Merciful ascended upon the Throne" (20:5). Since water symbolizes knowledge and "His mercy encompasses all things" (7:156), Ibn al-ʿArabī relates the Throne to the comprehensive knowledge of the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*):

> "The Throne rests upon water,"[65] means, it rests upon the command, the command rests upon knowledge and knowledge rests upon the Name. Thus, the Name includes itself, the command and knowledge because the Throne is the manifestation of the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*), as God says, "The Merciful ascended upon the Throne" since its spirit is the manifestation of the name *Allah*. Every name refers to the Essence and all that it accompanies, particularly the name the Merciful. God says, "Say, 'Call upon *Allah* or call upon the Merciful. Whichever you call upon, to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names'" (17:110). Thus, the manifestation of the Merciful is the manifestation of knowledge related to it, or the manifestation of all types of knowledge, in potentiality and actuality.[66]

In the microcosm, the spiritual Throne is the human heart according to a hadith, "The heart of the believer is the Throne of the Merciful."[67] Imām al-Ṣādiq says, "God created the Intellect, and it was the first creation from the spiritual beings, proceeding from His light, from the right side of the Throne."[68] Qūnawī describes the Throne in the following:

> The Throne, which is the first sensory form and encompassing all others, is the station where the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*) ascended (*istiwāʾ*), for it

> marks the completion and settling of divine theophany. "Mercy" is existence itself and the "Most Merciful" is God (*al-ḥaqq*) inasmuch as He is Being. That is why, "ascendency" (*istiwāʾ*) is never associated with any other name whenever it appears [in the Qurʾān].[69]

The Qurʾān also mentions the Pedestal, which is the counterpart to the Throne. If the Throne is the manifestation of the Merciful (*al-raḥmān*) and its place of ascendency, then the Pedestal is the manifestation of the Compassionate (*al-raḥīm*). Farghānī writes:

> The Pedestal is the manifestation (*maẓhar*) of the Guarded Tablet and governed by the Compassionate, and the Throne is governed by the Merciful. Just as the relative existential multiplicity hidden and conceptualized in the Sublime Pen (*al-qalam al-aʿlā*) becomes spiritually differentiated in the Guarded Tablet through the divine writing, according to the world of spirits, every principle (*ḥukm*) in summary form in the Throne becomes individuated in the Pedestal.[70]

Notes

1 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 71.
2 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 93.
3 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 49; Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 93.
4 The Daughters of the Names (*banāt al-asmāʾ*) refers to the names that are engendered and receptive of the activity of the names whose governance is more comprehensive.
5 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 4:178 (IV 176.8).
6 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 1, 40.
7 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 107.
8 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 86:324.
9 According to Aristotle, the categories of substance are five: matter, form, body, soul and intellect; and the categories of accidents are nine: quantity, quality, place, time, position, possession, relation, action and affection.
10 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:205 (II 208.24).
11 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 113.
12 Also referred to as Expansive Being (*al-wujūd al-munbasiṭ*).
13 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 115.
14 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 113.
15 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 117.
16 This term is derived from the Prophetic hadith, "I find the Breath of your Lord coming from the direction of Yemen." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:144 (I 97.21); Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 2:541; Ibn al-ʿArabī's version is slightly different, using the term "Breath of the Merciful" (*nafas al-raḥmānī*) instead of "your Lord."
17 Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 153.
18 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 37.
19 Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 184.
20 Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 2:750.
21 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1: no. 1; Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, 589, no. 13.

22 Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 567.
23 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:94 (III.95.19).
24 Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, 5: book 44, no. 3109; Muḥammad Ibn Māja, *Sunan Ibn Mājah* (Beirut, 2018), 1: book 1, no. 182.
25 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:326 (II 331.23).
26 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:395 (II 401.29).
27 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:390 (II.396.13).
28 The first individuation that emanates from the divine Essence possesses all the perfections of the Essence in the form of the names and attributes, also referred to as the Supreme Spirit.
29 Saʿīd al-Dīn Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, ed. J. Āshtiyānī (Mashhad, 1978), 551.
30 Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 153.
31 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Shajarat al-Kawn"* in *Majmūʿ Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 3:311.
32 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:508 (II 525.3).
33 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:507 (III 524:21). There is a similar idea in the Bible, equating existence with the Word, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." *Holy Bible: New International Version* (NIV) (London, 1996), John 1:1.
34 Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 486.
35 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:112, cited in Javād Mālikī Tabrīzī, *Risāla-yi liqāʾ Allah*, ed. Ṣ. Ḥusaynzāda (Qum, 2006), 19.
36 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:385 (IV 198:30). God's speech is His knowledge, and His knowledge is His Essence.
37 "The Messiah, son of Mary was only a messenger of God, His Word that He cast into Mary and a spirit from Him" (4:171).
38 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 207.
39 Āmidī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 1282.
40 Āmidī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 7234.
41 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, saying no. 392, 545.
42 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 77:231, no. 2.
43 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 83.
44 Chittick, "Mysticism versus Philosophy in Earlier Islamic History," 91. See also Herbert Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect: Their Cosmologies, Theories of the Active Intellect, and Theories of Human Intellect* (Oxford, 1992).
45 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1: no. 1; Ṣadūq, *al-Khiṣāl*, 589, no. 13.
46 Sayyed Hossein Nasr, "The Qur'an and Hadith as Source and Inspiration of Islamic Philosophy" in S. H. Nasr and O. Leaman, *History of Islamic Philosophy* (London, 1996), 70. See also Seyed Amirhossein Asghari, "Ontology and Cosmology of the *ʿaql* in Ṣadrā's Commentary on *Uṣūl al-Kāfī*." *Journal of Shiʿa Islamic Studies* 10/2 (2017): 157–182.
47 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1: no. 1.
48 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār: The signs of Intellect and Ignorance*, 1:108. Majlisī quotes this hadith from Ṣadūq, *ʿIlal al-sharāʿi* and *al-Khiṣāl*. The hadith continues, "So the Intellect fell in prostration and remained there for a thousand years. God said, 'Raise your head, ask and you shall receive, intercede and it will be granted.' So, the Intellect raised its head and said, 'My Lord, intercede on my behalf for the one whom I have been created.' God said to the angels, 'Bear witness that I have interceded for the one whom I have created the Intellect.'"
49 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 54:170; 1:97, no. 7, 8.
50 Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 1:110.
51 Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 272.
52 Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 477.
53 Abū Dawūd, *Sunan*, 4700.

54 Fakhr al-Dīn al-Rāzī, *al-Tafsīr al-kabīr* (Beirut, 2001), 8:260.
55 The Enraptured Ones *(al-malāʾikāt al-muhayyamūn)* are angels who stand in rank with the First Intellect and have turned their attention exclusively to God, so they have no awareness of either themselves or others. According to a hadith, "They have been enraptured by the Majesty and Beauty of God ever since their creation." See Sachiko Murata, "The Angels" in *Islamic Spirituality: Foundations*, ed. S.H. Nasr (London, 1987), 589.
56 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 118–9.
57 ʿAbd al-Karīm Jīlī, *al-Insān al-kāmil* (Beirut, 2000), 48.
58 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 55.
59 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 118.
60 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 57.
61 Kāshānī, *Taʿwīlāt* 12:645. See also Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 204.
62 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:421 (II 428.8).
63 Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn fī-l-maʿārif wa-l-ḥikam*, ed. M. ʿAqīl (Tehran, 2002), 396. Ghazālī makes a similar statement concerning the marvels of the heart in his *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, where he writes, "If you say, 'How can knowledge spring forth from the heart itself when it is devoid of it?' Know that this is one of the marvels of the heart's mysteries … The realities of things are inscribed on the Guarded Tablet, rather the hearts of proximate angels … The Creator wrote an archetype of the world from the beginning to the end on the Guarded Tablet. He then brought it out into existence according to that archetype." Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:23.
64 Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Bāqī al-Zurqānī, *Sharḥ al-Zarqānī ʿalā al-Mawāhib al-laduniyya bi al-minaḥ al-Muḥammadiyya* (Beirut, 2012), 1:55–6.
65 The Prophet said "God was, and nothing else was with Him, and His Throne was over the water. He then created the Heavens and the Earth and wrote everything in the Book." Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 7418.
66 Cited in Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 524.
67 Majlisi, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 55:39.
68 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī:* 1: no. 1. One of the commentators of Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-Kāfi*, Mullā Ṣālih al-Māzandarānī (d. 1051/1671) says, "The throne is the seat of a king. Spiritual beings proceeding from the right of the Throne allude to their nobility, loftiness and sublimity in comparison with the other creatures. Thus, they repose at the right-hand side of the King, which means three things in the religious tradition: The first, the kingdom; the second, the body which encompasses every other body; the third, the nine celestial spheres, and all-encompassing knowledge." Māzandarānī, *Sharḥ uṣūl al-kāfī*, 1: 202–210.
69 Qūnawī, *Fukūk*, 205.
70 Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, 42.

5 The Universal Worlds

The fundamental degrees of Being can be divided into five planes of manifestation called the Universal Worlds (*al-ʿawalim al-kulliyya*). The root letters *ʿ-l-m* of the word *ʿālam* (world) signify "to know" and relate to the word *ʿalāma*, which means sign or token. Lexically, the world is "that through which something is known," and according to the Sufis, the signs through which God is known; the world is also "everything other than God."[1] The Qurʾān refers to the signs "on the horizons" as the external worlds and "in their souls" as the human plane, "We will show them Our signs on the horizons and in their souls so that it becomes clear to them that He is the Truth" (41:53). These Universal Worlds are the comprehensive, universal signs that contain specific signs or entities. Though the Universal Worlds are limited to five, from another perspective, the worlds are infinite since every individual is a world through which God can be known. Qayṣarī writes:

> If every individual in the world is a sign of a divine name, and every name encompasses every other name insofar as the Essence comprehends them all, then every individual is also a world through which all the names are known. Therefore, the worlds are infinite, from this perspective. However, since the universal divine Presences are five, there are also five Universal Worlds, inclusive of everything else.[2]

Ibn al-ʿArabī also uses the term "Presence" (*ḥaḍra*) to describe the Universal Worlds, indicating that each world is in God's presence and that God is present in every world. Although there are as many "presences" as there are manifestations, the fundamental divisions of Being are the five divine Presences (*al-ḥaḍarāt al-ilāhiyya al-khams*). Chittick writes that the divine Presence is "the mode in which God displays His own reality,"[3] or that "location" where God is to be found. It includes the Essence of God, which is God in Himself without regard to His creatures; the attributes (*ṣifāt*) of God, also called His names (*asmāʾ*), which are the relationships that can be discerned between the Essence and everything other than Him; and the acts (*afʿāl*), which are all the creatures in the cosmos along with everything that appears from them. Hence, the term "divine Presence" designates God on

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the one hand and the cosmos, inasmuch as it can be said to be the locus of His activity, on the other.[4]

The Five Divine Presences

The Qurʾān expresses a fundamental dichotomy in Being, the Unseen (*al-ghayb*) and the Visible (*al-shahada*), "He is God, besides whom there is no other, Knower of the Unseen and the Visible" (59:22). The Unseen contrasts with the Visible, which is the external world and the final manifestation of the Essence. In relation to the absolute Unseen, every world is considered "visible." In relation to each other, the Intellectual World is the relative Unseen and the Imaginal World is the relative Visible. From another perspective, Being can be divided into three essential planes: divinity, existence and the human, or as Qūnawī writes, "Although the levels are numerous, they are reducible to the Unseen, the Visible and the reality which comprehends both."[5]

Ibn al-ʿArabī's followers have enumerated the Universal Worlds or Presences according to various typology. Generally, the Presences can be divided as follows: The degree of Divinity is the Unseen, which is divided into the absolute Unseen—that includes the names and attributes—and the relative Unseen, which is the Intellectual World. The Visible is also divided into the absolute Visible, the sensory world, and the relative Visible, the Imaginal World. The fifth Presence is the Perfect Human which encompass them all.

Qūnawī was the first to classify the Presences among the early commentators. As these refer to ontological levels and degrees of individuation, he excludes the Essence in his scheme, for the Essence is neither individuated nor known:

> The Presence of Knowledge or the Inward (*al-bāṭin*), which is the plane of the divine names and Permanent Archetypes. Facing this Presence is the sensory world or the absolute Manifest (*al-ẓāhir*). The Central Presence is that of the Perfect Human which comprehends both sides. To the right of the Central Presence and between the divine Unseen is the Presence of Spirits and to the left between it and the Visible World is the Imaginal World.[6]

Kāshānī considers the Essence as one of the Presences and excludes the Perfect Human in his model. The reason is that Kāshānī stresses the side of divinity in the first three levels—the Essence, Names and Acts—then considers creation in the last two, namely, the relative and absolute Visible worlds, or Imaginal and sensory, respectively.

> In the views of the Sufis, there are five worlds, each of which is a presence within which God becomes manifest: The Presence of the Essence; the Presence of the names and attributes, which is the Presence of Divinity; the

> Presence of the Acts, which is the Presence of Lordship; the Presence of the Imaginal and Imagination; the Presence of the Sensory and Visible. Each lower [presence] is an image and manifestation of the higher. The highest is the absolute Unseen, also called the ultimate Unseen (*ghayb al-ghuyūb*). The lowest is the Visible, which is the last of the Presences.[7]

Qūnawī's student Farghānī, enumerates five Universal Worlds yet considers the Perfect Human as the sixth. In contrast to Kashānī, the divine levels are two and the created levels are three:

> There is nothing in Being except a single individuation, which is the existence of the Absolute God and His reality. He is the only witnessed Being. However, this singular Reality and unified Essence has degrees of manifestation whose distinctions and individuations never cease. The universals of these degrees are limited to five, two of which are affiliated with the divine and three of which are affiliated with creation, and the sixth is the comprehensive degree.
>
> That is because these degrees, being theophanies and manifestations, are either the locus of God's theophany and manifestation alone, and not the entities in creation, or a locus for both God and creation. The former is called the degree of the Unseen since every existing thing is hidden in it from itself and from others. It has no [outward] manifestation except for God Himself.
>
> Entities cease manifesting in two instances: their Archetypes cease entirely, since "God is, nothing else is with Him." Their manifestation ceases in knowledge and reality by the cessation of their Archetype. This theophany is called the first individuation and the first degree of the Unseen.
>
> The second instance is when the qualities of manifestation no longer exist even though the Archetypes themselves do; they subsist and are distinct in the eternal divine knowledge, like images existing in our minds. This theophany and manifestation is the second individuation, the world of meaning, the second degree which is generally called the Unseen, as mentioned earlier.
>
> There are three types of theophany and manifestation for the objects of creation, either in knowledge or reality: If theophany and manifestation occur for entities that are simple in essence, it is called the "degree of the spirits". If it occurs for compound entities that are subtle and indivisible, and not susceptible to separation, perforation and cohesion, it is called the "degree of the Imagination". If it occurs for compound, dense and susceptible to division, separation, perforation and cohesion, it is called the "degree of sense-perception", the "Visible World" and the "world of bodies".
>
> The true complete human being encompasses all of them. We have now summarized the division of the universal degrees, with God's help.[8]

Jāmī's version in *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ* follows Kāshānī's model:

> Know that the world and its multiplicity are limited to five. These are called the Five Presences. These five planes are the display and manifestation of God and possess His attributes, and the attributes are necessary for the Essence. The first Presence is the Essence, which is called the absolute Unseen. None can speak of it because it has neither name, trace, expression nor allusion.
>
> The second is the plane of the Names, which is God's display of divinity. The third is the plane of Acts, which is the world of spirits and God's display of Lordship. The fourth is the Imaginal World, which is the place where various forms possessing meaning and reality are displayed. The fifth is the Visible and sensory worlds, which is the place where various existential forms are displayed. Thus, the highest plane is the absolute Unseen and the lowest plane is the absolute Visible.[9]

Qayṣarī writes that each world is a manifestation of the one above it:

> The world of Kingdom (*al-mulk*) is a manifestation of the Dominion (*al-malakūt*), the absolute Imaginal World, which is a manifestation of the world of Invincibility (*al-jabarūt*), the world of immaterial spirits, which is a manifestation of the Permanent Archetypes, which is a manifestation of the world of divine names and the degree of Unity, which is a manifestation of the Presence of Singularity.[10]

In the *Muqaddima*, he closely follows Qūnawī's scheme, maintaining that the first Presence is the Permanent Archetypes:

> The first universal Presence is the absolute Unseen, and its world is the Permanent Archetypes on the plane of [divine] knowledge. Opposing it is the Presence of the absolute Visible (*al-shahāda*), and its world is the Kingdom (*al-mulk*).
>
> The Presence of the relative Unseen can be divided into that which is closer to the absolute Unseen. Its world is the spirits of Invincibility (*al-jabarūt*) and Dominion (*al-malakūt*), that is, the world of immaterial Intellects and souls; and that which is closer to the Visible which is the Imaginal World (*al-mithāl*).
>
> The relative Unseen is divided into two categories because spirits have imaginal forms corresponding to the absolute Visible world, and intellectual immaterial forms corresponding to the absolute Unseen.
>
> The fifth Presence encompasses the previously mentioned four, and it is the human world which embraces every other and all that they contain.[11]

The Qurʾān refers to the Dominion (*malakūt*) in the verse, "Thus We showed Abraham the Dominion of the heavens and earth so that he might be among

the certain" (6:75), and refers to the angelic realm, derived from the Arabic word *malak* (angel). It is the manifestation of the Invincibility and occupied by the angels and spiritual beings. As such, there are different classes of angels, both with and without form, each corresponding to a macrocosmic and microcosmic reality. Qūnawī says,

> The various classes of angels are forms of the properties of the divine human reality's inward states and faculties. The Supreme Angels and the Bearers of the Throne are like the major organs with respect to the faculties deposited in each and the planets correspond to the limbs.[12]

It is also called the world of spirits or the Muḥammadan Spirit, which is the differentiated form of the Muḥammadan Light,[13] as the hadith mentions, "God spoke a word. He said to it, 'Be light!' then He spoke a word, and said to it, 'Be Spirit!' and He combined the spirit with the light."[14]

Its lower degree resembles the Imaginal World due to the existence of forms, while its higher degree, devoid of forms, resembles the world of Invincibility. The Imaginal World is subordinate to the Intellectual but encompasses the material world. The relative Unseen is divided into these two categories because spirits have Imaginal forms corresponding to the absolute Visible, and Intellectual meanings that correspond to the absolute Unseen.

The Qurʾān refers to the Kingdom (*mulk*) in the verses, "Blessed is He in whose hand is the Kingdom, who has power over all things; [He] who created death and life to test you" (67:1–2). As the Kingdom encompasses the cycle of life and death, it refers the sensory world; it is the final world in creation and the realm of true multiplicity. The Qurʾān also employs the terms, "the creation and command" (7:54), which refers to creation through intermediaries in the former, and engendering without intermediaries in the latter, such as the spirit, "[When] they ask you about the Spirit, say, 'The Spirit is by my Lord's command'" (17:85).

Thus, Qayṣarī's view can be summarized as follows: The first Presence is the Permanent Archetypes, the second is the world of spirits or immaterial intellects, the third the Imaginal World, the fourth the material world, and the fifth, which comprehends the previous four, the reality of the Perfect Human. Qayṣarī writes, "The Perfect Human is a universal world because he encompasses them all in summary with respect to his spirit, and individually with respect to his heart; through him the comprehensive name *Allah* is known."[15]

In *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, Fanārī explains that the name *Allah* is known through man because his inward reality is identical with the divine Reality, "The Perfect Human is the manifestation of the Comprehensive Name [*Allah*] and thus has a share in the Master's glory."[16] Since each presence is a shadow of the previous, the higher encompasses the lower, and the Perfect Human encompasses every world. He is the shadow of the name *Allah*, which represents all the divine names.

The Books of God

The five Presences are also considered the books of God, which represent stationary degrees in existence while divine words refer to the manifestations within those degrees. Words refer to entities that arise through the Breath of the Merciful, whereas books emphasize the order of Being and its descending degrees of manifestation. Words indicate God's engendering command, "Be!" and His independence from needing causal intermediaries to sustain the world. Words also refer to individuated realities and books refer to the world in summary form, Qayṣarī says:

> You must know that these worlds, their universals and particulars are all divine books because they encompass His Complete Words (*al-kalimāt al-tāmmāt*). The First Intellect and the Universal Soul—both of which are forms of the Mother of the Book, which is the plane of [divine] Knowledge—are divine books.[17]

The books of God are the existential and the written: The existential books include the macrocosmic book, the "horizons" and the microcosmic book, the "souls." The written books refer to the Qurʾān and other revealed scriptures.[18] The existential books are the Tablet of Effacement and Establishment (*kitāb al-maḥw wa-l-ithbāt*), the Manifest Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*) and the Mother of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*), referred to by the verses, "He effaces what He wishes and affirms what He wishes and to Him belongs the Mother of the Book" (13:39); "There is neither wetness nor dryness except that it is in the Manifest Book" (6:59); "Indeed the books of the righteous are in the sublime (*ʿilīyyīn*), and the books of the wicked are in the ignoble (*sijjīn*)" (83:18).[19] Qayṣarī writes:

> The First Intellect may be called the "Mother of the Book" for it encompasses things in summary, and the Universal Soul, the "Manifest Book" because of their detailed manifestation therein. The "Book of Effacement and Establishment" is the presence of the "Universal Soul imprinted on the Universal Body", with respect to its association with engendered things. This Book of Effacement and Establishment consists of individual forms within it, with respect to the necessary states accompanying their essences due to their original receptivity.[20]

In the microcosm, the intellect and heart correspond to the Mother of the Book and Guarded Tablet in the macrocosm, respectively. Since the intellect is a pen, it writes divine knowledge on the tablet of the heart. The soul corresponds to the Book of Effacement and Establishment as its states are constantly in flux. Qayṣarī draws numerous correspondences between microcosm and macrocosm:

> Thus, from the aspect of his spirit and intellect, he is the intellectual book, called the "Mother of the Book". From the aspect of his heart, he is the "Book of the Guarded Tablet", and from the aspect of his soul, he is the "Book of Effacement and Establishment", for these are noble pages, elevated and pure, that none shall touch nor perceive its secrets and meanings save those purified from the veils of darkness.
>
> The books that have been mentioned are the original divine books. As for their branches, they are the rest of existence consisting of the intellect, soul, spiritual and bodily powers, and so on, for they inscribe the properties of the entities, either entirely or in part, in summary or in detail. The least thereof is the inscription of its own properties. God knows best.[21]

Since books require pens, tablets and inkwells, Ibn al-ʿArabī combines all of these images in a single passage saying:

> The Tablet is the place where the Intellect is cast. It is to the Intellect as Eve is to Adam. Its *nūn*, which is the inkwell, expresses the summary of knowledge it contains in its essence. Differentiation occurs only in the Soul, which is a tablet. The former is the locus of collectivity and the latter is the locus of differentiation. The Pen has three-hundred and sixty nibs, insofar as it is a Pen, and three-hundred and sixty aspects insofar as it is an Intellect and three-hundred and sixty tongues insofar as it is a spirit that translates from God through the nib that conveys three-hundred and sixty seas; these are the various types of knowledge and is called a "sea" due to its vastness. These seas are the collectivity of the "inexhaustible Words" (18:109), and the Tablet is the Pen and what is below it. This is the case with every active and passive thing. The Cloud is the sixth Throne, which is the Throne of Life and it is a relative Throne; it has existence only in relation to something else. That is why it was not included in the category of Thrones. This sea is the division between God and creation and is the veil of Might.[22]

Qayṣarī quotes Imam ʿAlī's poem to substantiate the idea of the human comprehensiveness:

> Do you suppose that you are a small particle
> While the Great World is folded within you?
> You are the Manifest Book
> Whose Letters bring forth the hidden[23]

The Perfect Human

The Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), a focal point in Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrine, is the final divine Presence. It is the comprehensive book containing the entirety of existence and the microcosm of the Great World.[24] The term not

only denotes the archetypal human, but also denotes the human vicegerency entrusted to the prophets and saints through the fusion of divine grace and attainment, as the Qurʾān states, "I am going to place a vicegerent on the earth" (2:30). Thus, the Perfect Human exists in the Arc of Descent, which is man's original state of pure potentiality and the Arc of Ascent, his final actualized state. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> No one was entitled to be the vicegerent except the Perfect Human, for God created his outward form out of all the realities and forms of the world, and his inward form on the model of His own form. Nothing in the world possesses the comprehensiveness that is possessed by the vicegerent. In fact, he has obtained (his vicegerency) only because of his comprehensiveness.[25]

The microcosm is the mirror of the macrocosm, or in Sufi terminology the human is the Small Man and creation is the Great Man. Likewise, the human is the Small World and creation is the Great World. It can also be said that the human is the Great World, and creation is the Small World since only the human being is the direct and complete reflection of God, whereas creation is subordinate to God's vicegerent, the human being. Kāshānī says:

> Generally, the Great World refers to the entirety of creation and the Small World refers to the human being. But in the view of Ibn al-ʿArabī, the Great World refers to the Perfect Human (*al-insān al-kāmil*), and the Small World refers to creation. This is because the human exemplifies all that is in creation, but if the Perfect Human being were excluded from creation, then it would not contain all of it.[26]

Just as there are degrees of manifestation in the macrocosm, known as the divine Presences, there are also corresponding degrees on the human plane. The human being possesses an outward aspect, which is the physical body, and an inward reality. The outward aspect is composed of the elements and their compositions.[27] The Qurʾān refers to the outermost aspect, as the "lowest of the low" (95:5), since it is the most distant realm and lowest in degree in the Arc of Descent. Each of these degrees is a manifestation of some of the divine attributes, whereas the spirit is the manifestation of all the divine attributes identified by the name *Allah*.[28]

The Perfect Human traverses every world, so that he reaches the degree of Singularity, which encompasses all the divine names in union. Just as the spirit encompasses the summary of every reality and corresponds to the Mother of the Book (*umm al-kitāb*) in the macrocosm, the heart represents those realities in detail and corresponds to the Manifest Book (*al-kitāb al-mubīn*). The Perfect Human actualizes the divine names associated with each plane of existence, collectively or individually. Qūnawī, writes in *al-Fukūk*:

> Just as the divine Presence, referred to by the name *Allah*, comprises all the specific attributes, their particular properties, and their inter-relationships, so that there is no intermediary between the Essence and the attributes, likewise, from the point of view of man's reality and his station, there is no intermediary between man and God. His reality is such that he is the comprehensive isthmus (*al-barzakhiyyat al-jāmiʿa*) between the properties of necessity and possibility since he encompasses both.[29]

The human spirit originates directly from the divine Spirit, as the Qurʾān mentions, "I blew into him of My Spirit" (15:29) to which Qūnawī refers as, "the locus of manifestation of the comprehensive name *Allah*, sharing in the glory of his Master."[30] While the other entities in creation manifest some attribute or another, the human being singularly manifests all of the divine names, since each is determined by the properties of the divine names it manifests, taking on a specific relationship and existential position.

The Perfect Human is one who actualizes the divine names latent within the human spirit, or specifically the human heart, which is the sovereign in relation to the rest of the body. However, without wayfaring inwardly and remaining on the material plane, he remains veiled and estranged from the divine Presence. Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> The Perfect Human manifests the perfection of form, so he is the heart in the body of the world, which is everything other than God. He is the Flourishing House (*al-Bayt al-maʿmūr*)[31] of the Truth which encompasses Him. God says in a reported hadith, "The Earth and heavens do not encompass Me, but the heart of a believing servant encompasses Me." So, the rank of the Perfect Human is that of a heart between God and the world, and he is called a "heart" (*qalb*) because he is transmuted into every form.[32]

The world exists because of and through the Perfect Human, which is also the Supreme Spirit, the First Intellect and the Mother of the Book. Qūnawī says, "The true Perfect Human is the isthmus between necessity and contingency and the comprehensive mirror between the attributes of eternity and the attributes of contingency,"[33] on which Jami comments:

> He is the intermediary between God and creation. Through man's ontological plane, which is the reason for the subsistence of other than God, divine effusion and grace reaches the celestial and terrestrial in the entirety of creation. Were it not for his isthmus-like nature, which does not oppose either of the two sides, the world would not have received the unique divine grace because it would lack such a correspondence and affinity; the world would cease to exist.[34]

Jāmī further says:

> Know that every reality is a reality from the essence of the Perfect Human. His domain is an isthmus, a unification of realities from the sea of Necessity and a reality from its manifestation, the sea of contingency; contingency is its Throne (ʿ*arsh*) and Necessity ascended (*mustawiya*) over it. When the comprehensive, perfect theophany appeared in the perfect, human manifestation, it was received by its perfect unification and the essence of the theophany flowed in every reality of the essence of the Perfect Human. Then the light of theophany emanated to every relevant thing in the world. All of the bounties and blessings of mercy appear in the world after they have become determined in the Perfect Human, more intensely colored in him than anything else following him. Thus, the realities of the world are his subjects, and he is the vicegerent over them. The vicegerent is more entitled and better qualified to govern his subjects, although the vicegerents amongst themselves differ in rank.[35]

A comprehensive view of the perfect human surfaced in the words of Imam ʿAlī's when he described himself in his famous Sermon of Disclosure (*khutbat al-bayān*):

> I am the dot under the *bāʾ* of *bismillah*, I am the responsibility of God of which you have fallen short, I am the Pen, I am the Guarded Tablet, I am the Throne, I am the Pedestal, I am the Seven Heavens and Earths. I am the face of God, the right of God, the hand of God. I am the Supreme Pen, the Guarded Tablet, the Manifest Book, the speaking Qurʾān, *kāf, hā, ʿayn, ṣād*, '*alef lām mīm*: That is the Book. I am the *ṭa* of the ṭā *sīn*(s), the ḥā of ḥā *mīm*(s), entitled *yā sīn*, the *ṣād* of *ṣāffāt* (those who set the ranks), the *sīn* of *musabbiḥāt*. I am the *nūn* and the *qalam* (Pen), I am the banquet of generosity, I am the friend of Gabriel, the companion of Mīkāʾīl. I am described as "[there is] no chivalrous youth [save ʿAlī], praised as *hal atā*, I am the Great News, the Straight Path, I am the First, the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden."[36]

This extraordinary sermon recapitulates the main themes that we have been discussing in the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī, especially as it relates the concept of the Perfect Human. It should be noted that the use of "perfect" in this context refers to existentially complete and universal, which is conceptually prior to moral perfection. One who assumes the divine character is both existentially and morally perfect because he becomes the mirror of God.

Notes

1 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 133.
2 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 135.
3 Chittick, "The Five Divine Presences: from al-Qūnawī al-Qayṣarī," 108.
4 Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 5.
5 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 91.

6 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 90.
7 Kāshānī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 181.
8 Farghanī, *Muntahā al-madārik*, 25, quoted in Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 29–30. See also Farghānī, *Mashāriq al-darārī*, 36.
9 Jāmī, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, 181.
10 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 133.
11 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 133.
12 Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, *al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhiyyah*, ed. M. Khwājavī (Tehran, 2005), 67.
13 Umm Salma Nayrīzī, *Jāmiʿ al-kullīyāt* (Qum, 2002), 79.
14 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 15:15.
15 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 133.
16 Fanārī, *Miṣbāḥ al-uns*, 113.
17 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 137.
18 Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 453.
19 Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-manẓūma*, ed. Ḥ. Āmulī (Qum, 1995), 1:26.
20 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 137.
21 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 139.
22 Cited in Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 525.
23 Cited in Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 137.
24 Toshihiko Izutsu, *Sufism and Taoism*, 234–235. See also M. Takeshita, "The Theory of the Perfect Man in Ibn al-ʿArabī's *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*," *Orient* 19 (1983): 87–102.
25 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 55.
26 Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 386.
27 The ancient natural philosophers described these elements as earth, water, wind and fire, which were cardinal directions and material archetypes.
28 The inner landscape consists of the soul, the heart, the spirit, the inner heart, the secret, the mystery and other degrees mentioned in Sufi works. The further one moves from the bodily dimension inwardly, the more subtle, luminous, immaterial and noble each degree becomes.
29 Qūnawī, *al-ukūk*, 185.
30 Qūnawī, *Miftāḥ al-ghayb*, 113.
31 This term occurs in the Qurʾān (52:4). It refers to the heavenly counterpart to the Sacred House or Kaʿba.
32 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:288 (III 295.8).
33 Qūnawī, *al-Fukūk*, 248.
34 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 97.
35 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 89.
36 This is known as the Sermon of Disclosure cited in Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 411–563; Rajab b. Muḥammad Bursī, *Mashāriq anwār al-yaqīn fī asrār Amīr al-Muʾminīn* (Beirut, 1971), 21; Sulaymān b. Ibrāhīm Qundūzī, *Yanābīʿ al-mawaddah* (Beirut, 1997), 1:68.

6 The Imaginal World

Having examined the ontology of philosophical Sufism, the next two chapters explore epistemological matters, one that relates to the Imaginal World and the other, spiritual unveiling and its types. As the Imaginal World adjoins the material world, it unites the material with the immaterial, leading to various types of esoteric knowledge, since one who grasps the symbols of the Imaginal will more readily discern the various types of unveiling. This is because each world is a corresponding divine book and a correct reading of one will invariably lead to an understanding of the others, as "substantial realities are present in every spiritual, intellectual and imaginal world and have forms corresponding to each of their worlds."[1]

The Imaginal World is an isthmus (*barzakh*) between the corporeal and the Intellectual worlds. An isthmus refers to any intermediate reality that bears the properties of both things that it joins, without being governed by either one of them exclusively, as mentioned by Ibn al-ʿArabī here:

> A *barzakh* is something that separates (*fāṣil*) two things while never going to one side (*mutaṭarrif*), like a line that separates the shadow from sunlight … Even if sense perception is incapable of separating the two things, the mind grasps that there is a barrier (*ḥājiz*) between them, separating them. That barrier that the minds grasps is the *barzakh*. If the senses perceive them, then it is one of the two things, not the *barzakh* … A *barzakh* is something that separates a known from an unknown, an existent from a non-existent, a negated from an affirmed, an intelligible from a non-intelligible.[2]

The term *mithāl* (Imaginal) derives from the Arabic roots *m-th-l*, which means to resemble, imitate and appear in the likeness of. The Imaginal World is luminous and immaterial but resembles the corporeal world with respect to dimension and form, so it is imperceptible by the outer senses. Qayṣarī defines the Imaginal World in the following:

> Know that the Imaginal World (*al-ʿālam al-mithāl*) is a spiritual world of luminous substance similar to material substance in its being sensible

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> and measurable and to immaterial intellectual substance in its being luminous. It is not a composite material body nor is it an immaterial intellectual substance because it is an isthmus (*barzakh*) and dividing boundary between them. Anything that is an isthmus between two things must be other than either of them, but possess two aspects, each aspect resembling that which is appropriate for its realm.[3]

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the Imaginal World is one of the five divine Presences that straddles the Intellectual and the material worlds, or as Qūnawī describes, "to the left between the Central Presence and the Visible World."[4] Although it is a single reality, when authors refer to its macrocosmic aspect it is called the Disconnected Imaginal World (*ʿālam al-mithāl al-munfaṣil*), and when they refer to the microcosmic faculty of imagination in the human, it is called the Connected Imaginal World (*ʿālam al-mithāl al-muttaṣil*). Qayṣarī says:

> It is called the Imaginal World because it contains forms of whatever exists in the corporeal world, and for its being the first representation in form of the Archetypes and realities on the plane of divine knowledge.[5]

The Disconnected Imaginal World is a reflection of the Permanent Archetypes in the Great World and exists independently of the human soul. The Connected Imaginal World is associated with the Small World and thus refers to the soul's imaginal faculty. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The common folk do not know the imagination nor enter it except when they dream and their faculties return to it. The elite see it in wakefulness through their ability to realize it."[6] Every reality has a form in the Disconnected Imaginal World since each world is a reflection of the previous in the order of Being, and the origin of these realities is the Permanent Archetypes. The corporeal world is a shadow of the Imaginal, which is a shadow of the Intellectual. Jāmī writes:

> Whatever exists in the sensory realm has a form in the Imaginal World, and all that exists in the Imaginal World has a form and reality in the plane of Lordship, and all that exists in the plane of Lordship has a form and name in the plane of the divine names.[7]

The Imaginal World is also the most comprehensive of the worlds, as Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The Presence of Imagination is the vastest of presences. It combines the two worlds, the world of the Unseen and the world of the Visible."[8] The function of the imagination is to give meaning to form, as Ibn al-ʿArabī describes:

> The reality of the imagination is to embody and give form to that which has neither body nor a form, for it only perceives in this way. Thus, it is an inward sense bound between the intelligible and sensory.[9]

Through the soul's faculty of Imagination, the gnostic perceives spiritual meanings by entering the Disconnected Imaginal World in the same way that a river connects to the ocean. He is also able to discern spiritual meanings in the external world since all things in existence have an inward and outward form. These spiritual significances are the signs on the "horizons" and in the "souls" or the words in the books of existence. Thus, the gnostic sees external events as God's perpetual theophany and self-disclosure. There is no world where God is not present nor manifestation where He cannot be seen, as Imam ʿAlī states, "I did not see a thing except that I saw God before it, after it and with it."[10] Ibn al-ʿArabī explains the relationship between the outward and inward dimensions in the following passage:

> God placed within each thing an outward and an inward dimension, and the human soul is one of those things. In the outward, the soul perceives things which are called "entities" and in the inward, it perceives things which are called "knowledge." God is the Outward and the Inward, so perception takes place through Him.
>
> […] Thus, if God reveals Himself, either out of kindness or in answering a request, He does so to the outward dimension of the soul and perception occurs through sensation in a form within the *barzakh* of representation (*tamaththul*).[11]

Just as there are outer faculties of perception through which one acquires knowledge of the external world, there are also inward faculties of the soul.[12] The inward senses subsist directly through the spirit and do not depend on external organs for their activity. Mullā Ṣadrā writes, "The soul's imaginal power is a substance that is essentially separate from the body, the imaginal power in man—by which I mean the imaginal level of his soul—is a substance whose being is actually and essentially separate from this sensible body and tangible frame, as has already been mentioned. This power remains despite the decline and failure of this (bodily) frame."[13]

If the soul divests from bodily preoccupations, spiritual meanings are realized. This may at times occur through clairvoyance (*firāsa*), and other times dreams, since the soul's connection to the Imaginal World is closer in dreams and hypnogogic states (*nuʿās*)[14] than in wakefulness.

Clairvoyance (*firāsa*)

If the Imagination becomes illuminated by a divine light, it endows one with clairvoyance or perspicacity of vision. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The most perfect and penetrating light is one that reveals what God intends by a form seen in the Imagination and in a vision,"[15] Jāmī further explains, "Luminosity governs the Imaginal World due to its proximity to the world of spirits and the superior world of the divine names and attributes."[16] Although imagination is one of the faculties of the human soul, the common person is unable to

comprehend the spiritual meanings they encounter either in wakefulness or in dreams. The gnostic, however, reads the existential books of God with clairvoyance through the light of faith (*al-firāsa al-īmāniyya*).

The word *firāsa* is derived from *tafarrus*, which means discernment or circumspection (*tathabbut*) or observation (*naẓar*).[17] It is said, "He saw (*tafarrasa*) in him virtue when he observed him carefully with perspicacious vision."[18] When a person observes something with this type of insight, he is able to ascertain its hidden qualities and its true nature. *Firāsa* is used here in the general sense, but the intent is both *firāsa* of the "souls" (*anfusiyya*) and *firāsa* of the "horizons" (*āfāqiyya*). *Firāsa* with respect to *naẓar* is ascertaining the inner reality of a thing through its outward form. Those who possess this *firāsa* see with the light of God and the manifestation of the divine name the Light (*al-nūr*). Qayṣarī says, "The gnostic knows the state of a person by their form through the clairvoyance of unveiling (*al-firāsa al-kashfiyya*) as [the Prophet] has stated, 'Be wary of the believer's clairvoyance, for he sees with the light of God.'"[19] This is affirmed by the verse in the Qurʾān, "Had we wished, we could have shown them to you and you would have known them by their marks, but you will certainly recognize them by the tone of their speech. God knows your deeds" (47:30).

Professor Akram al-Majid writes:

> One endowed with *firāsa* hits the mark at the very first instance and does not resort to interpretation, supposition and calculation. He neither experiences neglect nor forgetfulness, rather it is God's judgement spoken on the tongue of the servant, unlike discursive *firāsa* that relies on knowledge and study, which at best, is speculative. The hadith states, "Knowledge is not extensive learning but a light that God casts in the heart of whomever He wishes to guide."[20] Things are seen through this light, so let not the singularity of manifestation and deduction deceive you. "Can they be compared to those who have clear proof from their Lord, recited by a witness from Him" (11:17)?[21]

The believer sees not only with physical eyes, but also with the vision of his insight, as they are unified. Ibn al-ʿArabī explains *firāsa* in the following:

> *Firāsa* through faith is a divine light which God gives to the person of faith in the eye of his insight just like the light which belongs to the eye of sight. When a person has this *firāsa*, its mark is like the light of the sun through which sensory objects appear to sight. When the light of the sun is unveiled, sight differentiates among the sensory objects.
>
> The reason that the light of *firāsa* is attributed of the name *Allah*, which is the name which brings together the properties of all the names, is that this light unveils both the praiseworthy and the blameworthy, both the movements of felicity pertaining to the next abode and the

> movements of wretchedness. Some of the people of *firāsa* have reached a point where, upon seeing a person's footprint in the ground—though the person himself is not present—they are able to say that he is a felicitous person or a wretched person. This is similar to what is done by a tracker who follows footprints. The clairvoyant (*mutafarris*) says, for example, "The owner of this footprint was white and blind in one eye." Then he describes his character, as if he sees him, including various accidental matters connected to his character. He sees all this without seeing the person himself.[22]

Since *firāsa* is a type of unveiling, there are degrees of *firāsa* according to one's spiritual orientation. ʿAfīf al-Dīn Tilmisānī in his *Sharḥ manāzil al-sāʾirīn* writes,

> What I gather from experience is that the Sufi's *firāsā* distinguishes between those who are worthy to stand before God and those who are not. They recognize those who have receptivity and strive for the sake of God, and whether or not they have arrived at the Presence of Union (*ḥaḍrat al-jamʿ*). This is the *firāsa* of the gnostics.
>
> The *firāsa* of the ascetics (*ahl al-riyāḍa*) is acquired through hunger, seclusion and purifying the inward, but without having arrived before God's presence. Their *firāsa* relates to the unveiling of forms and hidden matters specific to creation. They only convey things about creation because they are veiled from God. As for the Sufis, their sole preoccupation is the gnosis of God, so they impart [knowledge] concerning God.[23]

Dreams

Dream interpretation is an important branch of Islamic knowledge informed by the story of Joseph in the Qurʾān. Joseph says, "O my father! I saw (in a dream) eleven stars and the sun and the moon; I saw them prostrating themselves to me." "O my son! Relate not your vision to your brothers, lest they plot against you. Satan is to man an open enemy! Thus, your Lord will choose you and teach you the interpretation of events" (Quran 12:4–6).[24] Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "God did not place sleep in the animal kingdom except for everyone to witness the Presence of Imagination and know that there is another world that resembles the sensory world."[25]A dream is a vision in the Imaginal World with or without meaning. A vision may be seen behind the veil of the imagination, either in sleep, wakefulness or a state between the two, but the dream is seen only when the bodily senses have ceased to function in sleep. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> Dreams have a place, a locus, and a state whose state is sleep which is the absence from the outward sensory things … Sleep is of two types: a

> transferal within which there is some rest, attaining a desire, or an increase in weariness. The second type is only rest, which is pure and correct sleep.
>
> […] As for the type that is transferal, it is the type in which there are dreams. So, the soul's faculties are transferred from the outward senses to inward, in order to see what exists in the treasury of Imagination, insofar as the senses have extrapolated from sensory objects—and what has been formed by the compositive imagination[26] (*muṣawwira*) which is one of the assistants of this treasury.[27]

The Prophet said, "Dreams are of three types: It is either from God, inspired by Satan, or man conveying something to himself,"[28] and "The sound dream is one of the forty-six parts of prophethood."[29] Qayṣarī writes, "Witnessing of forms sometimes occurs in wakefulness and sometimes in sleep, just as sleep is divided into confused dreams and other types."[30] Najm al-Dīn Rāzī discusses the general division of confused and sound dreams. He describes two general categories of dreams in the following section:

> The dream is that which occurs when the senses have ceased to function, the imagination has begun to operate, and a certain object becomes visible to the one overcome by sleep. There are two kinds of dream: the first is the confused dream,[31] that which is perceived by the soul through the instrumentality of the imagination and is derived from the temptations of Satan and the whisperings of the soul. These are infused in the dreamer by Satan and the soul; the imagination forms a suitable image of them and conveys that image to the gaze of the soul. Such confused and disorderly dreams are not liable to interpretation; one must seek refuge in God from them and not relate them to anyone.
>
> The second kind of dream is the good dream known as "sound," which the prophet defined as one of the forty-six parts of prophethood … The sound dream is of three kinds. Whatever is in the first kind has no need of explanation or interpretation: it comes to pass exactly as seen … The second kind of sound dream is that in which part needs interpretation and part comes true exactly … The third kind of sound dream is that which needs interpretation in its entirety, like the dream of the king — "I see seven fat ears of corn" (12:43).[32]

Dreams inform of the interpretation of events, referred to as the knowledge of allusion.[33] Joseph states, "Father, this is the interpretation of my dream I had before" (12:100). Because of the vast scope of the Imaginal World, both prophets as well as the wayfarers participate in dreams. Nābulusī, an expert in dream interpretation says:

> Prophetic dreams come from God through the angel of dreams who descends upon their hearts by God's command. They see exactly what is

> disclosed to the imagination in its likeness and correspondence. For this reason, dream interpretation has been made permissible like Qurʾānic exegesis and hermeneutics. Dreams are either sound or ambiguous dreams just like verses of the Qurʾān, and it has been related in the hadith that dreams are a part of prophecy, "Prophecy has ended but visions remain." The believer sees or is shown sound dreams.[34]

As the Imaginal World is the initial destination in the Unseen, dreams present spiritual meanings divested of form appearing from the higher worlds. Because of the inseparable relationship between the soul's inner faculties and bodily powers, dreams and visions result from both inward and outward states. Sound dreams and visions are representative of sound actions. Qayṣarī explains the reason for the sound dream:

> The reasons for their soundness can sometimes be traced to the soul, sometimes the body and sometimes both. As for the reasons stemming from the soul, they are, for example, complete attention to God, habituating to truthfulness, inclining the soul to the spiritual Intellectual World, purification from defects, shunning bodily preoccupations and exemplifying praiseworthy attributes, since these strengthen the soul and render it luminous. The extent to which the soul is luminous, it is able to disengage itself from the sensory realm and remove the darkness that causes the lack of witnessing.
>
> In addition, the correspondence between the soul and the immaterial spirits strengthens because it acquires their characteristics. Thus, [spiritual] meanings effuse upon it causing attraction to those spirits resulting in complete witnessing. Then, if the period of that effusion ceases, the soul returns to the visible world, imbued with knowledge and possessing that form engraved upon it because of its impression on the imagination.
>
> As for the reasons originating in the body, it stems from its soundness, balance of its individual constitution and mind. As for the reasons originating from both, it stems from the performance of religious duties (*ṭāʿāt*), bodily worship, good deeds, using one's powers and faculties in accordance with divine commandments, maintaining a balance between excess and deficiency therein, continually being in the state of ablution, and turning away from other than God by being occupied with invocation, especially from the evening until one sleeps.[35]

The Intermediary World (*barzakh*)

The Imaginal World is also known as the posthumous *barzakh*, as mentioned in the Qurʾān, "Behind them is an isthmus (*barzakh*) until the Day they will be resurrected" (23:100). It is the state that man enters posthumously before the Day of Resurrection. It is also known as the Lesser Resurrection since the servant is transferred from the life of this world to the life of the

Intermediate World (*barzakh*) in the imaginal body, as in the Prophet's saying: "When someone dies, his Resurrection has already begun."[36] In eschatological terms, Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> This *barzakh* is other than the first; the first is called the possible Unseen and the second, the impossible Unseen, due to the possibility for those in the first to appear in the visible world, and the impossibility of return for those in the second, except in the hereafter.
>
> […] The realms, although numerous, are limited to six: the first is the realm of "Am I not your Lord?" (7:172),[37] and we have already become separated from it; the second is the world (*al-dunyā*)[38] in which we are right now; the third is the *barzakh* to which we go after the lesser and greater deaths; the fourth is Resurrection on the "Earth of Awakening" (79:14) and the "return to the Origin" (79:10); the fifth is the Paradise and the Fire; and the sixth is the Dune outside the Paradise.[39]

Though their properties are similar, this *barzakh* is other than the Imaginal World mentioned earlier. Since actions leave their impressions upon the soul, deeds become corporealized (*yatajassam*) in the posthumous *barzakh*, reflecting the inward realities of outward forms. Qayṣarī writes:

> You must know that the *barzakh* that contains spirits after the severance of the worldly plane is other than the intermediary realm that is between immaterial spirits and bodies, since the degrees of Being's descent and ascent are circular.
>
> Furthermore, the forms that accompany the spirits in the posterior *barzakh* are the forms of actions and the result of previous works in the worldly plane, in contrast to the forms of the prior *barzakh*. Thus, neither is identical to the other except for the fact that each is a spiritual world, luminous substance, immaterial and contain the imaginal forms of the world.[40]

The imaginal power in man is essentially separate from this sensible body and tangible frame. It is an autonomous power that remains despite the decline and failure of this frame. Sadrā writes, "The unsoundness and passing away of the body do not penetrate to its essence and its perceptions. Yet at death, the pains and sufferings of dying may reach it because of its submersion in this body. After death it may conceive its essence as a man having the shape and dimensions of the form which he had in this world and conceived its body as dead and buried."[41]

Thus, when the soul completes its term in the world, it sheds its bodily form and transfers to its first destination. It then emerges in its true form, revealing its real nature, which is the totality of its earthly acquisitions. Whether referring to the Lesser or Greater Resurrection, Imām Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq declares, "Men will be raised up in accordance with the form of their

actions," or in another version, "according to the form of their intentions."[42] Since the Imaginal World has form without matter, what is hidden in the cloak of the body becomes visible. Mullā Ṣadrā explains this in the following passage:

> It is in these forms that they will be resurrected and rise up at the Awakening; that is, in another mode of being than this [physical] one. In this world, therefore, man stands between becoming an angel, a devil, a brute, or a predatory beast. If knowledge and reverence predominate in him, he will become an angel. Or if he is given over to hypocrisy, cunning, and compounded ignorance, then he will be a rebellious devil. If he surrenders to the effects of sensuous appetite, he will become a brute beast, and if overcome by the effects of irascibility and aggressiveness then he will be a predatory animal. Thus, according to the habits and states of character which predominate in a man's soul, so will he rise up in a corresponding form on the Day of Rising.[43]

Thus, the soul remains either in a state of bliss or in a state of suffering, as mentioned by the hadith, "The grave is a garden from the gardens of paradise for the believer, and a pit from the firepits of hell for the unbeliever."[44] The soul's forms are ontologically unified with it and thus the experience of the grave arises from its own reality. Moreover, since the Imaginal World is not limited to the individual's imaginal faculty, the soul may be accompanied by either angels or satans and witness realities corresponding to that world. Mullā Ṣadrā explains:

> Above all, you must not believe that what man sees after his death of the horrors of the grave and the various states of the Resurrection, are merely imagined things, without any being in concrete reality … Rather, the things [experienced in] the Rising and the states of the other world are more powerful in their being and more intensely real and actual than these forms existing in [earthly] matter, which are objects [generated from the elements] by means of motion and earthly time.[45]

Those souls that have acquired a luminous transcendent essence incline toward the higher angelic realms because of their greater ontological receptivity and correspondence. Qayṣarī writes:

> The perfected human souls assume a shape that is other than the sensory shapes they possessed while in the world because of their power to divest themselves from their bodies. After having entered the hereafter, this power increases by the removal of bodily limitations and they have access to all the worlds of the Dominion just as the angels enter this world and can assume the shape of the inhabitants [of any world].[46]

Notes

1 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 147.
2 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:380 (I 304.16).
3 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 147.
4 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 90.
5 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 149.
6 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:43 (III 42.18).
7 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 181.
8 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:43 (III 42.11).
9 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:366 (III 377.11).
10 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 70:22.
11 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:222 (I 166.4).
12 The human body has seven corporeal faculties: attraction, retention, digestion, expulsion, nutrition, growth and imagination, and seven sensory faculties: vision, hearing, taste, smell, touch, speech and intellect. Perception has two divisions: Outward perception, which occurs through the five senses and inward perception, which perceives either sensory forms or sensory meanings. The goal of perception is to integrate the outward senses with the soul, as outward senses convey information for it to perceive. According to the Peripatetic philosophers, the inward faculties of perception are the following:

    Fantasy: The faculty of fantasy (*al-hiss al-mushtarak*), or *sensus communis* is the power that embraces the forms impressed on it by the five senses.

    Imagination: The faculty of imagination (*al-khayāl, al-muṣawwira*) is the repository of what the fantasy receives from the five senses. Thus, the content of sensory perceptions remains within it even after their disappearance.

    Intellection: The faculty of intellection is called "imagination" in relation to the animal soul and "rationality" in relation to the human soul. It collates what is in the fantasy, separating some information according to its discretion.

    Speculation: The faculty of speculation (*al-wāhima*) perceives non-sensory meanings that exist in perceptible things. For example, expressing love for a particular child.

    Memory: The faculty of memory stores the meanings that the faculty of speculation perceives.

    The third faculty is the rational faculty of the human being. It further consists of two faculties, the practical intellect and the theoretical intellect:

    Practical Intellect: It drives the body to perform actions that are advantageous.

    Theoretical Intellect: It perceives universals and turns its gaze to the superior, communicating with and benefiting from it. As a consequence, it is able to accept the Truth that it seeks. Akram Al-Mājid, *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn: bāb al-firāsa*, ed. Ḥ. al-Azraqī (Qum, 2008), 35, 171–172.
13 Mullā Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-ʿarshiyya* (Beirut, 2000), 49, trans. J. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne* (Princeton, 1981), 158.
14 The state immediately before falling asleep.
15 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Naqsh al-fuṣūṣ* cited in Jāmī's *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 6–7.
16 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 179.
17 al-Mājid, *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn: bāb al-firāsa*, 35.
18 Ibn Manẓūr, *Lisān al-ʿarab*, 5:110.
19 Jalāl al-Dīn Suyūṭī, *al-Jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr fī aḥādīth al-bashīr al-nadhīr* (Beirut, 2017), 1:142; Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 24:128; Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 151.
20 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 67:140; 1:225.
21 Akram al-Mājid, *al-Khalq al-jadīd*, trans. M. Ali, *The New Creation* (London, 2018), 140.
22 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:232 (II 235.35), trans. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 304.

23 ʿAfīf al-Dīn Tilmisānī, *Sharḥ Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*, ed. M. Bīdārfar (Qum, 1992), 347.
24 The Qurʾān uses the expression, *taʿwīl al-aḥādīth*, which is the interpretation of events in both the Imaginal and material worlds.
25 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:195 (III 198.23).
26 See Davidson, *Alfarabi, Avicenna, and Averroes, on Intellect*, 89.
27 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:373 (II 378.24).
28 Muslim, *Saḥīḥ*, book 29, no. 5621.
29 Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 6982.
30 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 157.
31 The Qurʾān refers to the confused dream as *aḍghāth al-aḥlām* in verses 12:44 and 21:5.
32 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 288.
33 "The knowledge of allusion is one of the properties of the Imaginal World, which is an isthmus between the Intellectual and material worlds. Its speech is the language of both the Connected and Disconnected Imagination, from a treasured, hidden light in God's ancient knowledge. This type of knowledge is interpreted, whether it occurs in dreams or visions." Al-Majid, *al-Khalq al-jadīd*, trans. M. Ali, *The New Creation*, 146.
34 ʿAbd al-Ghanī Nābulusī, *Jawāhir al-nuṣūṣ fī ḥall kalimāt al-Fuṣūṣ* (Beirut, 2008), 1:286.
35 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 155.
36 Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 4:718.
37 This is referring to the primordial covenant that God took from the souls before they entered the world.
38 The word *dunyā* is derived from *dunūw*, which means low or base.
39 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Risālat al-anwār*" in *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 123.
40 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 161.
41 Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-ʿarshiyya*, 49, trans. J. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 158.
42 Aḥmad b. Muḥammad Barqī, *Kitāb al-maḥāsin* (Najaf, 1964), 1:409.
43 Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-ʿarshiyya*, 41, trans. J. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 146.
44 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:346 and 33:545.
45 Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-ʿarshiyya*, 62, trans. J. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 179.
46 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 159.

7 Unveiling

Unveiling (*kashf*) is the hallmark of Ibn al-ʿArabī's metaphysics and the established methodology of the prophets and saints. Since epistemology is the theory or discipline that investigates the origin, nature, methods and limits of knowledge, Sufi epistemology relates to the various types of unveiling, such as witnessing (*shuhūd*), tasting (*dhawq*), theophany (*tajallī*), inspiration (*ilhām*), revelation (*waḥy*), clairvoyance (*firāsa*) and intuition (*ḥads*). These are the sources of gnosis (*maʿrifa*) that reveal mysteries (*asrār*) and realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) of the Unseen. Gnosis is understanding spiritual significances and hidden meanings. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The prophets and saints among God's folk did not have knowledge of God through thought (*fikr*); God purified them from that. Rather, they had 'openings' of unveiling concerning God."[1] Although specific revelation vis-à-vis the Qurʾān was sealed with Prophet Muḥammad, the door remained open for other forms of unveiling, as Imām ʿAlī states:

> God has made remembrance (*al-dhikr*) a polish for the hearts, by which people hear after being deaf, see after being blind and yield after being resistant. In every age, there are servants of God with whom He whispers in their thoughts and speaks to in the depths of their intellects. They spread light through their awakened and illuminated hearing, sight and hearts, reminding [others] of the Days of God and invoking reverence for His status, like guideposts in the desert. Whoever adopts the way, they praise his path and give him glad tidings of deliverance, but whoever swerves right or left, they disparage his course and warn him of ruin. Thus, they are lamps in the darkness and guides through these doubts … It is as though they have crossed from the world into the hereafter and behold what lies beyond it. They become aware of the unseen [realities] of the people of the *barzakh* during their long stay there, and it is as though the Day of Judgement has already fulfilled its promise for them. Unveiling that curtain for the people of the world, they see what people do not see and hear what people do not hear.[2]

Unveiling is also called direct knowledge (*ʿilm al-ladunnī*),[3] which does not require an intermediary between God and man. Āmulī explains:

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> It is like the light from the lantern of the Unseen cast on the pure, subtle and open heart … *ʿIlm al-ladunnī* is the knowledge of the Prophets and the saints, but revelation is specific for the Prophets, such as Adam, Ibrāhīm, Moses, Muḥammad and others—peace be upon them all.[4]

As mentioned, the root letters *w-j-d* of the word *wujūd* signify both "existence" and "finding." Both finding and witnessing are types of spiritual awareness; in the former one unifies with reality whereby he "finds" it within himself, and in the latter, one witnesses it through a spiritual light.

Although gnosis is the cornerstone of Sufism, reason and reflection allow the gnostic to describe spiritual truths for the laypeople.[5] Alternatively, reason is a preparatory stage for the acquisition of transcendental knowledge insofar as it outlines the path and its ontology; the knowledge of universals prepares the soul to receive the realities it represents. René Guénon notes, "Theoretical knowledge, which is only indirect and, in some sense, symbolic, is merely a preparation, though indispensable, for true knowledge."[6]

Nevertheless, the Sufis have been generally dismissive of this sort of reflection or acquired knowledge (*ʿilm iktisābī*) since it is a shadow of true knowledge and a veil for gnosis (*maʿrifa*). Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> Thought does not yield sound knowledge, nor by what the rationalists claim by means of their reflective powers. Sound knowledge is only that which God casts in the heart of the knower. It is a divine light that he dispenses to the servants that He chooses whether angel, messenger, prophet or saint. He who has no unveiling (*kashf*) has no knowledge.[7]

Imām al-Ṣādiq defines true knowledge in his famous statement, "Knowledge is not extensive learning, rather it is a light that God casts in the heart of whomever He wishes to guide."[8] As all knowledge is derived from God's knowledge, rational disciplines and even the sciences that relate to this world can be acquired through unveiling. Ibn al-ʿArabī further clarifies the distinction between rational knowledge and divine knowledge acquired through unveiling:

> There are three kinds of knowledge: [The first] is intellectual, which is the knowledge you obtain through proofs.
>
> The second is the knowledge of states (*aḥwāl*), which can only be reached through tasting (*dhawq*). The person of reason cannot define it nor provide proofs for it.
>
> The third is the knowledge mysteries (*asrār*), which is beyond the stage of reason. It is the knowledge that the Holy Spirit casts in the inner heart (*rūʿ*), which is specific to the prophets and saints … One who knows this third type—the knowledge of mysteries—knows all types of knowledge, but this is not the case for the other types. Thus, there is no knowledge nobler than this comprehensive type, which encompasses all objects of knowledge.[9]

Unveiling is a type of spiritual experience that secures direct knowledge of realities, gained immediately and effortlessly. The Sufis differentiate between formal learning (*ʿilm ḥuṣūlī*) and experiential knowledge or "knowledge-by-presence" (*ʿilm al-ḥuḍūrī*). It is also called "inherited knowledge" because the saints inherit the knowledge that the prophets receive from God, as the hadith affirms, "The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets."[10] Āmulī distinguishes between inherited and acquired knowledge:

> Understand that knowledge can be divided into two types: the formal and acquired, and the inherited and divine. Formal, acquired knowledge is through gradual learning carried out by arduous human exertion and excessive toil over a long period of time. Inherited divine knowledge is obtained through divine instruction either gradually or instantaneously, with ease and comfort and in a short amount of time. Each one of them is obtainable without the other. Inherited knowledge is beneficial even without the former, but the former is of no use without the latter, such as the knowledge of the prophets and saints, for it is beneficial without exoteric knowledge, but exoteric knowledge is of no use without esoteric knowledge.[11]

Unveiling and Witnessing

Unveiling and witnessing are terms often used interchangeably, both referring to the perception of unseen realities. Jurjānī defines unveiling as, "Gaining awareness of matters concerning the Unseen and the verities of things that are customarily behind the veil."[12] In the terminology of the Sufis, it refers to the perception of a hidden reality, theophany or manifestation. If the source of divine manifestation is taken into consideration, it is called theophany (*tajalī*) or manifestation (*ẓuhūr*), but if it is in reference to the perceiver, such as a vision or spiritual experience, it is called unveiling (*kashf*) or witnessing (*shuhūd*).[13] Qayṣarī says:

> Know that *kashf* lexically signifies the removal of a veil, as in, "The woman exposed her face," that is, removed her face-veil. Technically, it signifies gaining awareness of hidden meanings and existential realities from behind a curtain, existentially or through witnessing, and it occurs in meaning and in form.[14]

"Form" refers to that which occurs in the Imaginal World through the five senses. Qayṣarī outlines the types of sensory unveiling in the following selection:

> [Unveiling] occurs either through witnessing, like the vision of one who sees the forms of corporealized spirits and spiritual lights, or it occurs in the form of audition, such as the Prophet's hearing, peace and blessings

> upon him, of revelation descending upon him in metered speech, or the ringing of a bell, or the humming of a bee, as related in a sound hadith; for he used to hear that and understand its intent therein. Or it occurs in the form of olfaction, which is the inhalation of the divine breeze and the aroma of Lordship. The Prophet, upon him peace, said, "God possesses breezes during your days; will you not then encounter them?"[15] He said, "I find the Breath of the Merciful coming from the direction of Yemen."[16] Or, it occurs in the form of palpation, which is by communion between two lights or two imaginal bodies, as related by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. ʿAuf—may God be pleased with him—that the Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, said, "I saw the Lord, the Most High, in the most beautiful form." God said, "What is the higher plenum (*al-malaʾ al-aʿlā*) disputing about, O Muḥammad?" He replied twice, "You know best, my Lord." He said, "So God, placed His palm between my shoulders and I felt its coolness between my breasts, then I knew whatever was in the heavens and the earth."[17] Then he recited the verse, "We showed Abraham the dominion of the heavens and the earth so that he would be among the certain" (6:75). Or, it occurs through tasting, like one who sees different types of food, so if he tastes it and eats from it, he comes to know a spiritual meaning. The Prophet, peace and blessings upon him, said, "I saw that I was drinking milk to the point that its wetness flowed from my fingertips. So, I gave its excess to ʿUmar, and I interpreted that as knowledge."[18]

As for witnessing, Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> Witnessing (*shuhūd*) is to see the things by the proofs of divine unity (*tawḥīd*), and it is also seeing God in things. It is also the reality of certainty (*yaqīn*) without any doubt; it follows unveiling or it is said that it is followed by unveiling.[19]

Najm al-Dīn Rāzī defines unveiling in the following:

> Know that the true sense of unveiling is the emergence of something from the veil in such manner that the one to whom it is unveiled perceives it, whereas he had not perceived it before. Thus, God said, "We have removed your veil (50:22), that is, We have removed the veil from in front of your gaze so that what you did not see previously is now uncovered to your gaze."[20]

He then explains the nature and types of veils:

> The veil consists of those obstacles that prevent the sight of the bondsman from attaining the beauty of the Glorious Presence. These obstacles are constituted by all the different realms of this world and the hereafter,

> which, according to one tradition, number eighteen thousand, according to another, seventy thousand, and according to yet another, three hundred and sixty thousand. Seventy thousand is most suitable since it conforms to an authentic tradition: "God has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness." These seventy thousand realms exist in man's own nature; he has an eye corresponding to each realm by means of which he beholds it, insofar as it is unveiled to him.

It can be gleaned from the hadith above that veils are of two types: veils of light and darkness. Veils of darkness are opaque due to the soul's attachment and immersion in corporeal nature, whereas veils of light are subtle, and at the highest level, relate to the names and attributes. Since gnosis is connected to the degree of the soul's transcendence, the greater the attachment to corporeal nature, the stronger the veils occluding the heart's vision. When the veils of darkness are lifted through the soul's purification, the heart becomes illuminated and receives inspiration (*ilhām*).

There are several benefits to unveiling as it procures true knowledge of the soul, the nature of the path and other spiritual meanings, as Rāzī describes:

> The disclosure of visions to the gaze of the wayfarer has three benefits: The first is that through them he is made aware of his own states, whether excess or deficiency; motion, pause or interval; ecstasy, eagerness, or languor; delay or advancement. He is also informed of the stages and stations of the path, of degrees of ascent and descent, of elevation and depression, and of the true and the false.
>
> The second benefit of visions is that, deriving from the heart, the spirit and the angelic realm, they yield a certain taste. The soul gains from them such libation and nourishment, such joyous taste and ardor, that it annuls intimacy with creation, with all to which instinctual nature is accustomed, and with sensory delights and corporeal pleasures, and instead forms acquaintance with the unseen and the spiritual world, with subtle essences and inner meanings, with mysteries and realities.
>
> The third benefit is that it is only by virtue of vision deriving from the Unseen that certain stations of the Path may be transcended.[21]

The Varieties of Unveiling

There are various types of unveiling according to the ascending degrees of immateriality. Those that are not divested of form have remnants of materiality, and as such, unite on the Imaginal plane, connecting the outer and inner senses. Qayṣarī writes:

> Those spiritual faculties are the origin of the bodily senses, so if the veil between them is removed, the origin unifies with the branch, and what is

> witnessed by the bodily senses is witnessed by the [spiritual faculties] and the spirit witnesses all of that through its essence.[22]

Unveilings that correspond to some spiritual meaning in the Imaginal World may be perceived through audition, olfaction or vision, as in the Prophet's saying, "I find the breath of the Merciful coming to me from the direction of Yemen,"[23] and when Abraham "took one glance at the stars and said, 'Lo, I am ill'" (37:88–89). Unveilings related to the outer senses may or may not have a spiritual orientation, so for some, these relate only to worldly matters. The Sufis often dismiss this sort of unveiling as it does not lead them to God, classifying it as a form of satanic artifice. According to Āmulī, the unveiling of form is not the criterion for true gnosis:

> It is appropriate to mention it here because most people of our time claim that the perfection of a gnostic is in the unveiling of form. Since most of the world's people are detached from God and are preoccupied with the world, their hearts incline towards those who have unveiling of form and convey hidden information regarding the condition of the created. So, they magnify them and believe that they are truly God's folk and His elect. They turn away from the people of true unveiling and they malign them for the things they convey about God, saying "If these were truly the people of truth as they claim to be, they will have informed us about our states and the condition of the created. That is, if they are not able to convey the condition of the creatures how is it that they are able to convey higher knowledge?" They belie them; this is a false criterion. Thus, they are blind to the conveyance of truth. But they do not realize that God has safeguarded them from discerning the creation and selected them exclusively for Himself, and out of protectiveness, they are absorbed only with Him. If He had subjected them to [discerning] the conditions of the created they would not have been worthy of God. The people of God are not worthy of the creatures, just like worldly people are not worthy of God.[24]

As the Imaginal World is an intermediary stage of unveiling in which forms are represented, it is an isthmus between the higher world of the intellect and the lower corporeal world. These types of unveilings occur frequently in dreams or in a hypnagogic state. They occur according to the clarity of one's insight (*baṣīra*) and receptivity, as Qayṣarī says, "Unveiling possesses degrees in accordance with the removal of veils, either in their entirety or the removal of some veils over others."[25]

Unveilings on the Imaginal plane have form and meaning and those on intellectual plane have meaning without form. The latter consist of knowing intellectual or spiritual matters without intellection and drawing immediate conclusions from premises. Qayṣarī writes:

> As for the unveiling of meaning divested of the forms of realities, it is acquired from the theophany of the names, the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*) and the Wise (*al-ḥakīm*); it is the manifestation of meanings of the Unseen and realities in themselves.[26]

The lowest form of this is intuition (*ḥads*), which occurs in the reflective faculty (*al-quwwat al-mufakkira*), as Qayṣarī says, "Intuition is a flash of its light because the reflective faculty is corporeal, so it becomes a sort of veil for the light that reveals meanings from the Unseen; this is the lowest form of unveiling."[27] Jurjānī states, "Intuition is the immediate arrival of conclusions from their premises in contrast to reflection; it is the lowest form of unveiling."[28]

Intellectual unveiling also occurs in the rational faculty, which employs the reflective faculty; it is also called the "sanctified light" (*al-nūr al-qudsī*).[29] Qayṣarī says, "Opening is of two types: opening in the soul, which confers complete knowledge by way of transmission (*naql*) and intellect (*ʿaql*), and opening in the spirit, which imbues knowledge existentially and not through transmission and intellect."[30]

Inspiration (*ilhām*) and revelation (*waḥy*) are types of unveiling that have specific characteristics, as Qayṣarī describes:

> The difference between inspiration and revelation is that the former may be received from God without the medium of an angel, through a specific mode that is present with every creature, while revelation is received through an angel.
>
> For that reason, divine utterances (hadith *qudṣī*) are not called "revelation" or "Qurʾān" even though they are the speech of God.
>
> Revelation is characteristic of prophethood for its being connected to the exoteric and inspiration is characteristic of sainthood (*wilāya*). Moreover, [revelation] is conditioned by propagation unlike inspiration.[31]

Āmulī further clarifies the difference between revelation and inspiration in *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*:

> Know that revelation is specific or general. The specific is reserved for the Prophets and messengers, and this occurs with or without the intervention of an angel. That which occurs through an intermediary is reserved for the messengers and the "resolute ones" (*ūlu-l-ʿazm*).
>
> […] The second is called inspiration but this is not correct because inspiration is specific for the saints and successors, and revelation is for the Prophets and messengers.
>
> General [revelation] is common to the animals, inanimate objects, human beings and satans, rather all created beings.
>
> […] The fact is that revelation has a specific, technical meaning and a general, lexical meaning, and there is no incongruity between the two.

> Inspiration is also specific and general. The specific is reserved for the saints and successors and it may occur with or without an intermediary. That which is through an intermediary occurs as a voice outside the person whereby he hears and understands the intended meaning. It is as the initial state of the Prophets, such as visions and their like, and the second type of revelation is closer to inspiration. Inspiration that occurs without intermediary refers to meanings and realities cast into the hearts of the saints from the Unseen, in a single instance or gradually, like the sun's rays shining over houses in a city and its people.[32]
>
> […] If you have come to know the difference between revelation, inspiration and their degrees, know that what is received from specific revelation is called prophetic, divine knowledge. The knowledge obtained from specific inspiration is called unseen, direct knowledge (*ladunnī*). General revelation and general inspiration give rise to either angelic reflections or satanic thoughts. Furthermore, know that although inspiration of divine knowledge is present in all times, its strength and manifestation is greater in this time. Because, when God shut the door of specific revelation and terminated the trajectory of prophethood, He wanted to open the door of inspiration and expand the path of saint-hood, in kindness and concern for his servants and their condition. This door remains open in this world.[33]

Unveilings can be classified according to the worlds in which they occur, as every higher world is the inward aspect of the lower. The Dominion (*malakūt*) is the inward aspect of the Kingdom (*mulk*), the Invincibility (*jabarūt*) is the inward aspect of the Dominion, and the Divinity (*lahūt*) is the inward aspect of the Invincibility. These correspond to the material, Imaginal, Intellectual and divine planes, respectively. Unveiling that occurs at each of these degrees possesses spiritual significance and provide the gnostic with a type of knowledge specific to that world. Some Sufis reach as far as the First Intellect and the Mother of the Book, or the Universal Soul and the Manifest Book, and they witness the Tablet, the Pen, the Spirits of the higher plenum, the Book of Obliteration and Establishment, the Pedestal, the Throne and the seven heavens. "One who witnesses the Permanent Archetypes on the plane of divine knowledge enjoys the highest station of all."[34]

Unveilings can also be classified according to the theophany of the divine names to which they refer. Hearing a reality from the Unseen is the theophany of the All-Hearing (*al-samīʿ*), just as knowledge is the theophany of the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*). Some of these unveilings may be divested of form, including those from the theophanies of the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*), but others may have form such as those secured from the Fashioner (*al-muṣawwir*).[35] Qayṣarī writes:

> These types [of unveiling] may combine with one another or appear individually. They are all theophanies of the divine names since

> witnessing is the theophany of the All-Seeing (*al-baṣīr*), and audition of the All-Hearing (*al-samīʿ*), and so on. Each type possesses a divine name that lords over it, and all serve under the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*), even if they are among the Mothers of the Names.[36]

Unveiling does not merely accompany spiritual disciplines but is the ontological realization of the human spirit and its return to God in the Arc of Ascent. Gnosis of God, therefore, is the goal and the criterion of truth. Although in theory, unveiling relates to epistemology, it is through the ontological "becoming" that the soul attains true knowledge. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "You advance nothing except the transference from knowledge to vision; and the form is one."[37] Unveiling is both the means of spiritual advancement and its reality. The more profound the unveiling, the more unified the gnosis. This is because multiplicity arises from the descending degrees of Being. The knowledge which originates from the one God bears the imprint of His singularity; it is unified and comprehensive, as Imam ʿAlī states, "Knowledge is a single point, the ignorant have made it multiple."[38] Thus, the highest form of gnosis is to witness only God and His theophanies and disregard every other type of unveiling, as Qayṣarī says, "The realized gnostic—because of his knowledge of God, His degrees and manifestations on the worldly plane and that of the hereafter—remains with Him eternally, sees none other than Him, and sees everything as divine theophanies."[39]

Degrees of Unveiling in the Heart

The truest unveilings occur at the degree of the heart, for it is the wellspring of gnosis and understanding. The heart possesses a vision, hearing and awareness. Imam ʿAlī was asked by his companion Dhiʿlib whether he had seen his Lord. He replied, "Would I worship a lord whom I have not seen?" Dhiʿlib then asked, "O Commander of the Faithful, how did you see Him?" He said, "O Dhiʿlib, eyes do not see Him through the power of sight, but hearts see Him through the verities of faith."[40] Conversely, the unreflective heart can become blind, as the verses state, "It is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts in the breasts" (22:46), and "God has placed a seal upon their hearts, and upon their hearing and sight is a covering" (2:7).

After the sensory form of unveiling, unveiling occurs in the outermost aspect of the heart, called the breast (*ṣadr*). If an angel inspires it, it is called inspiration (*ilhām*), or if Satan or the Jinn inspire it, it is called insinuation (*waswās*). However, it is more accurate to say that inspiration occurs in the heart and insinuation occurs in the breast (*ṣadr*) since Satan has access only to the breast, as the Qurʾān states, "From the evil of the whisperer who whispers in the breasts of men" (114:5), whereas the heart is the divine Throne and the true *Kaʿba* (house of God). Qayṣarī writes:

> Then, it occurs at the level of the heart (*al-qalb*) and may be called "inspiration" (*al-ilhām*) if, at this station, it [reveals] outwardly a meaning of the Unseen. But if it reveals a certain reality, immaterial spirit or one of Permanent Archetypes, it is the heart's witnessing (*mushāhadāt qalbiyya*).
>
> Then, it occurs at the level of the spirit (*al-rūḥ*), it is the spirit's witnessing (*shuhūd rūḥī*). It is analogous to the sun shining upon the heavens to the degrees of the spirit and the earths to the degrees of the body.[41]

Inspiration imparts meanings of Unseen realities without witnessing (*shuhūd*). If one witnesses Unseen realities themselves, it is called witnessing of the heart. Rāzī says,

> It sometimes happens that the purity of the heart attains perfection, the veils become transparent and the meaning of the verse, "We shall show them Our signs upon the horizons and in their own souls" (41:53), is made apparent. If man looks into himself, he sees only God; and indeed, if he looks into all beings, wherever he looks he sees only God.[42]

Unveiling at the degree of the spirit is higher than that of the heart, as Rāzī goes on to say:

> When the light of God casts its reflection on the light of the spirit, man's witnessing of God becomes mingled with the taste of God's witnessing of Himself … When the spirit becomes entirely pure and is cleansed of all corporeal contamination, infinite worlds are unveiled and the circle of pre- and post-eternity becomes visible to the eye.[43]

It is also said that unveiling at the level of the spirit is connected to the divine names directly, since the realm of the spirit is related to the First Intellect and the Mother of the Book, both of which represent summarized realities. The light cast by the spirit's luminosity informs the heart of spiritual realities in detail, since the heart is associated with the Universal Soul. Unveilings of the heart can occur in its inner aspect called the *fu'ād*, as God says, "The inner heart (*fu'ād*) did not belie what it saw" (53:11), or "occur at the level of the mystery (*sirr*), then at the level of the hidden (*khafī*). With respect to each of their stations no reference or description is possible."[44]

The modes of acquiring transcendental knowledge in all of its forms relate to the soul's detachment from bodily nature, moral purification, and spiritual receptivity to divine theophany. This is achieved through disciplining the soul, reviving the intellect, burnishing the tablet of the heart and orienting oneself to the divine presence. Qayṣarī says, "The truest unveilings and most

complete are obtained by those whose spiritual constitution is closest to being perfectly balanced, such as the spirits of the prophets and the perfected ones from among the saints."[45]

These elements, however, only create a certain receptivity. The most important factor in the view of the Sufis is divine attraction and bestowal, which is conferred on one who achieves the humility of servanthood. This is why the quintessential witnessing was the Prophet's ascent (*miʿrāj*) to the divine presence, attained through the attribute of servanthood (*ʿubūdiyya*), as the Qurʾān states, "Glory be to Him who took His *servant* on the Night Journey" (17:1), which culminated when he was within two bows' length or nearer to God.

> He was on the loftiest horizon. Then he drew near and was suspended. Until he was within two bows' length or nearer. Then He revealed to His servant what He revealed. The inner heart (*fuʾād*) did not belie what it saw (53:7–11).

Thus, servanthood is the worthiest attribute that adorns the human being, so when it is realized, the human being reaches the perfection that God desires.

Thus, the wayfarers and seekers of Truth strive to illuminate the inward domain of the soul so that it becomes the Spirit's manifestation and the recipient of divine attraction. Those Sufis who seek only God and have effaced any trace of otherness—since "God only reveals Himself to one whose trace is effaced and name is erased"[46]—only concern themselves with the heart's orientation, hoping to pierce the veils of light and reach the Fountainhead of Magnificence, as Imam ʿAlī supplicates:

> My Lord, grant me perfect separation from all but You. Illuminate the vision of our hearts by the luminosity of gazing upon You, so that the heart's vision pierces the veils of light and reaches the Fountainhead of Magnificence, and our spirits become attached to the Splendor of Your Sanctity.[47]

These unveilings that occur in the heart are intrinsic to the human being and forged in the reality of the spirit, as the Prophet states, "He who knows himself, knows his Lord,"[48] and Jesus says:

> Do not say that knowledge is in the heavens so who will ascend and bring it back, or it is in the earth so who will go down and mine it, nor across the ocean so who will cross it and return with it? Knowledge is forged into your hearts! Refine yourself at the hands of God with etiquette of the spiritual and adorn yourself by the character of the truthful and it will manifest from your hearts until it immerses you and overflows from you.[49]

Notes

1 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 3:116 (III 116.23).
2 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 222, 342.
3 *ʿIlm al-ladunnī* is direct knowledge from God, as in the verse, "You will receive the Qurʾān from the presence (*ladunn*) of one who is Wise and Omniscient" (27:6). Khiḍr, the consummate figure of mystical knowledge in Sufism is described in the Qurʾān as having this type of direct knowledge from God, "So they found one of Our servants, on whom We had bestowed Mercy from Ourselves and whom We taught knowledge from Our Own Presence (*ladunnā*)" (18:65).
4 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 449.
5 Hujwīrī says in his *Kashf al-maḥjūb*, "Gnosis is the life of the heart through God, and the turning away of one's inmost thoughts from all that is not God. The worth of everyone is in proportion to [their] gnosis, and he who is without gnosis is worth nothing … In reality Man's only guide and enlightener is God. Reason and the proofs adduced by reason are unable to direct anyone into the right way. The Commander of the Faithful, ʿAlī, was asked concerning gnosis, he said, 'I know God by God, and I know that which is not God by the light of God.'" ʿAlī b. ʿUthmān Hujwīrī, *Kashf al-maḥjūb* (Tehran, 1979) trans. R.A. Nicholson, *Kashf al-maḥjūb: The Oldest Persian Treatise on Ṣufism* (London, 1911), 269.
6 René Guénon, "Oriental Metaphysics" in *The Sword of Gnosis*, ed. J. Needleman (London, 1986), 47.
7 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūhāt*, 1:281 (I 218.19).
8 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 67:140; 1:225.
9 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūhāt*, 1:69 (I 31.11). Referring to the hadith, "The Spirit cast into my heart/mind (*rūʿ*)," which denotes the intellect and understanding. It is the place of fear, admiration and approval by beauty or by courage. See E.W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*.
10 Related by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dawūd, Nasāʾī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad.
11 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 472.
12 Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 193.
13 The latter relates to epistemology and how the gnostic realizes divine theophany, whereas the former relates to ontology, namely, Being and its manifestations.
14 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 163.
15 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 77:166, no. 2.
16 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:144 (1:97.21); Qūnawī, *Fukūk*, 265; Aḥmad Ibn Ḥanbal, *Musnad*, 2:541; See also Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 42; Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 127; Todd, *The Sufi Doctrine of Man*, 102.
17 Ibn Ḥanbal *Musnad*, 1:378; Ibn al-ʿArabī provides a commentary on this hadith in chapter 306 of the *Futūḥāt*, 3:27. ʿĀʾisha related that al-Hārith b. Hishām asked the messenger of God, "Messenger of God, how does the revelation (*waḥy*) come to you?" The Messenger of God replied, "Sometimes it comes like the ringing of a bell; it is the hardest on me. Then it passes from me after I have grasped what it said. Sometimes the angel appears to me as a man. He speaks to me and I grasp what he says." Bukhārī, *Saḥīḥ*, book 1, no. 2.
18 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 165.
19 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūhāt*, 2:127 (II 132.4).
20 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 304.
21 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 290–293.
22 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 171.
23 Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 3:153.
24 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 468.
25 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 169.
26 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 171.

27 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 173.
28 Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 67.
29 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 173.
30 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 173.
31 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 454–455.
32 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 453–455.
33 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 458.
34 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 169.
35 This categorization is particularly important in the journey through the divine names. One may refer to Ibn al-ʿArabī's book *Kashf al-maʿnā*, which describes the stages of realization (*taḥaqquq*), attachment (*taʿalluq*) and acquisition (*takhalluq*) of the divine names, each being accompanied by witnessing the manifestations of each name.
36 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 165.
37 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Risālat al-anwār*, 123–131. See Chittick, "Ibn al-ʿArabī on the Benefit of Knowledge" in *The Essential Sophia*, eds. S. H. Nasr and K. O'Brien (Bloomington, 2006).
38 Aḥsāʾī, *ʿAwālī al-laʾālī*, 4:129; Ismāʿīl b. Muḥammad ʿAjlūnī, *Kashf al-khafāʾ wa mazīl al-ilbās* (Beirut, 1968), 2:67.
39 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 167.
40 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 179, 258; Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:98, no. 138.
41 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 173.
42 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 299–300.
43 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 299–300.
44 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 175.
45 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 175.
46 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 233.
47 Imam ʿAli's supplication known as *Munajāt Shaʿbāniyya*. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 91:97.
48 Āmidī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 7946.
49 Cited in Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 513.

8 The Human Vicegerency

The ontological framework of philosophical Sufism can be divided into two main themes: divinity and man. Although it was stated that the human is the fifth divine Presence, because it comprehends the previous four, it is placed vis-à-vis divinity. In the opening chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*, Ibn al-ʿArabī explains the centrality of man in the divine order:

> God wished to see the essences (*aʿyān*) of His Beautiful Names, which are infinite—or if you will, to see His Own Essence in a comprehensive being (*kawn jāmiʿ*) who embraces the divine order so that His mystery would be revealed to Himself. This is because the vision a thing has of itself is not the same as the vision it has through something else which acts like a mirror.[1]

Thereafter, he outlines the principles of Sufi anthropology in his own digest of the *Fuṣūṣ*, a short treatise entitled *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*:

> Know that the Most Beautiful Divine Names necessitate by their essences the existence of the world. Thus, God engendered the world as a harmonious body and made Adam its spirit. What I mean by "Adam" is the existence of the human world. He taught him all the divine names, for the spirit governs the body, insofar as it possesses faculties. As such, the divine names are, for the Perfect Human, equivalent to the faculties. That is why it is said that the world is the Great Man, which is inclusive of the Perfect Human. The human being is the epitome of the divine Presence, for which reason he was singled out to be in [His] form. "God created man in His form," and in a [another] narration, "In the form of the Merciful."[2] God made him the desired aim of creation, like the rational soul is to the individual. For this reason, the world is in ruins by his disappearance and because of him its edifice is transferred to the hereafter.
>
> He is prior in intention and final in creation, outward in form and inward in rank or station. He is the servant of God, but lord in relation to the world. For that reason, He made him and his sons vicegerents.

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> None in creation claims lordship except man on account of the powers he possesses, and none exercises the station of servitude in himself except man. So, he worships stones and inanimate objects which are the most base and lowest of the entities. Yet, nothing is loftier in lordship than man, nor is there something lower than him in servitude.
>
> Thus, if you understand this, as I have explained what is meant by man, then look at his greatness in relation to the Most Beautiful Names and his seeking of them. He who seeks [the Names] through him knows his greatness and [upon finding] his appearance through them understands his lowliness. So, understand! Thus, it is clear that he is a replica of two forms, God and the world.

The Qurʾān identifies man's eminence as the vicegerent of God and the complete manifestation of the divine names, "I am going to make a vicegerent on earth" (2:30); "When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit, then fall down before him in prostration" (38:72); "What prevented you from prostrating to whom I have created with My own two hands?" (38:75); "God taught Adam the names, all of them" (2:31). Ibn al-ʿArabī says in the *Fuṣūṣ*:

> The world subsists in virtue of his existence. He is to the world what the setting of a seal is to the seal; that is to say, the place where the imprint is engraved, the symbol with which the king seals his treasures. This is why he has been called *khalīfa*; for through him, God preserves His creation, as the seal preserves the treasures. As long as the king's seal remains unbroken, no one would dare to open the treasures without His permission. Thus, man has been charged to guard the kingdom, and the world will be preserved for as long as the Perfect Human subsists therein.[3]

Not only is man a comprehensive being, but he is the origin and purpose of creation. His spirit, deriving from the divine spirit, is more comprehensive than every other creature and his form encompasses the mineral, vegetal and animal worlds in their entirety. Qayṣarī says:

> If you know this, then you will know that the realities of the world in both knowledge and actuality are manifestations of the human reality, which is the manifestation of the Supreme Name *Allah*. Thus, the spirits of the world are the particulars of the human Supreme Spirit, whether they are celestial, elemental or animal spirits. Their forms, along with their requisites, are the forms and requisites of that reality.[4]

Fayḍ Kāshānī explains the verse, "God taught Adam all the names" (2:31), saying:

> The human being was created from different parts and various powers enabling him to ascertain different types of perception: the rational, sensory, imaginative and illusory. Most importantly, it is the awareness of the essences of things, their specifics, the principles of knowledge, the axioms of construction, the use of instruments, and the ability to differentiate between the friends of God and His enemies. The entirety of this knowledge results in his being the manifestation of all the divine names and the comprehensive recipient worthy of every ontological perfection, that is, his being chosen as the Great Book of God, which is the Greatest World.[5]

The Comprehensive Isthmus

The human being is described as the isthmus between God and the world. His essence is the spirit, the most proximate and superior of God's creation, and his outward form embodies the realities of the world. As mentioned earlier, "Anything that is an isthmus between two things must be other than either of them, but possess two aspects, each aspect resembling that which is appropriate for its realm."[6] However, since the human reality is the manifestation of the Essence, and the realities of the world are the manifestations of the Supreme Name *Allah*, the human being is not only the isthmus between God and creation, but the comprehensive isthmus (*al-barzakhiyyat al-jāmiʿa*) and the collectivity of all the divine manifestations. Qūnawī says:

> Man is an isthmus between the Presence of Divinity and the Presence of Engendered Existence, a transcription (*nuskha*) comprehending both Presences. So, every single thing is delineated within his level, which consists of all-comprehensiveness.[7]
>
> […] Just as the divine Presence, referred to by the name *Allah*, comprises of all the specific Attributes, their particular properties, and their inter-relationships, whereby there is no intermediary between the Essence and the attributes, likewise there is no intermediary between man and God, with respect to his reality and his station. His reality is such that he is the comprehensive isthmus between the properties of necessity and possibility since he encompasses both.[8]

Just as there is no intermediary between man and creation, Imām ʿAlī says, "There is no veil between God and his creation."[9] The human being embraces the properties of both the divine and contingent realms. He engenders the entities with respect to his origin and reality, and he is the fruit of creation with respect to his form. Jāmī writes:

> Know that every reality is a reality from the essence of the Perfect Human. His domain is an isthmus, a unification of realities from the sea of Necessity and a reality from its manifestation, the sea of contingency;

> contingency is its Throne (*ʿarsh*) and Necessity ascended (*mustawiya*) over it. When the comprehensive, perfect theophany appeared in the Perfect Human manifestation, it was received by its perfect unification and the essence of the theophany flowed in every reality of the essence of the Perfect Human. Then the light of theophany emanated to every relevant thing in the world. All of the bounties and blessings of mercy appear in the world after they have become determined in the Perfect Human, more intensely colored in him than anything else following him. Thus, the realities of the world are his subjects, and he is the vicegerent over them. The vicegerent is more entitled and better qualified to govern his subjects although the vicegerents amongst themselves differ in rank.[10]

Because man is the mirror for the divine attributes, his very existence is the greatest proof of God, as Imām al-Ṣādiq states:

> The human form is the greatest proof of God for His creation. It is the book that He wrote by His own hand, the edifice that He constructed by His wisdom and the totality of the forms of the worlds. It is the summation of knowledge in the Guarded Tablet, the evidence for all who do not bear witness, and the testament against every disbeliever. It is the straight path to every good and the bridge spanning paradise and hell.[11]

Although God is not in need of the contingent to prove His existence, divine wisdom necessitated that man be created in His form and become His greatest proof. Thus, it is only through the divine reflection in man that every divine perfection is manifested.

From the Qurʾānic point of view, when God says, "I am placing on the earth a vicegerent" (2:30), the station of vicegerency was reserved for the human being who was created in the image of God and was the complete reflection of all the divine names. Were there to exist a creature whose reality man did not encompass, he would not hold the station of vicegerency, because a vicegerent governs his subjects. It would be possible, then, for that creature to possess a degree over man in the aspect that he lacked and thus undermine his vicegerency.

However, God chose Adam over all His creation, making him the object of prostration.[12] Even the angels were unable to fathom Adam's superiority as indicated by their inability to relate the names as that God had commanded them. He says, "Inform Me of the names of these, if you are truthful. They said, 'Glory be to You! We have no knowledge except what You have taught us'" (2:31–32). Only man was able to inform them of the names, "O Adam, inform them of their names," God says, "Did I not tell you that I know the Unseen of the heavens and the earth?" (2:31–33).

The angels had been limited by their own individual essences and veiled by their own horizons, alluded to by the verse, "We do not have but a specified station" (37:164). Ibn al-ʿArabī writes, "God created man's outward form

out of all the realities and forms of the world, and his inward form on the model of His own form. Nothing in the world has the comprehensiveness that the vicegerent possesses."[13] Ibn al-ʿArabī says in *Inshāʾ al-Dawāʾir*:

> Man was the isthmus between God and the world, embracing both God and the world. He is the dividing line between the shadow and the Sun, and this is his reality; he has absolute perfection in the temporal and the eternal. To God belongs perfection in the eternal and He does enter the temporal—hallowed be He from that! The world has absolute perfection in the temporal and does not enter the eternal. Man encompasses both, so what is more noble than this reality, more manifest in creation, lower and baser than him! One is the Prophet—peace and blessings on him—and another is Abū Jahl, one is Moses, and the other is Pharaoh. So, the "best form" is realized, as the cornerstone of the obedient and the proximate and the "lowest of the low" is realized in the unbelievers and deniers. So, glory be to the One, "there is nothing like Him, and He is the Hearing and Seeing."[14]

The Macrocosm and the Microcosm

There are correspondences between God and man vis-à-vis divine vicegerency, and between man and the universe. Ibn al-ʿArabī employs the terms the Great Man (*al-insān al-kabīr*), the Small Man (*al-insān al-ṣaghīr*), the Great World (*al-ʿālam al-kabīr*) and the Small World (*al-ʿālam al-ṣaghīr*) to denote the macrocosm and microcosm, respectively. The terms have multiple designations each referring to the same essence from different perspectives. The term Great Man often denotes the world, which is in reality, the *form* of the human being. However, it can also refer to the human being since he is the manifestation of the Supreme Name *Allah*. In this sense, the Small Man refers to the world, since it is a manifestation of the human being through the spirit's descent in the levels of Being.[15]

The macrocosm originates from the divine emanation descending through the divine command "Be!" and generating the different levels of existence. Qūnawī writes:

> Absolute emanation of the Essence (*muṭlaq al-fayḍ al-dhātī*) creates the First Intellect, also called the Pen, then the Tablet, then the Throne, then the Pedestal, then the Heavens, one after another, then the elements, then the three progeny, minerals, plants, and animals,[16] and finally man, who is colored by all that which passed before him.[17]

The Great Man is the macrocosm in Qayṣarī's view, "The individualized world is called the 'Great Man' by God's folk, because of the manifestation of the human reality and its requisites,"[18] since the terms the First Intellect, the Supreme Pen and the Universal Soul are juxtaposed with Secret, Arcane,

spirit, heart, and so on, which are realities in the microcosm, the human spiritual landscape. He writes in the *Muqaddima*:

> Just as there are manifestations of the divine names from the First Intellect, the Supreme Pen, the Light, the Universal Soul, the Guarded Tablet, and others we have alluded to, indicating that the reality of man is manifest by these realities in the macrocosm, there are manifestations of the divine names in the microcosm, according to the levels designated by God's folk, and they are the Secret, the Arcane, the Spirit, the Heart, the Word, and *rūʿ*—with a *ḍamma* on the *rāʾ*—the *fuʾād*, the Breast, the Intellect and the Soul.[19]

The divine names have corresponding manifestations in the microcosm as they do in the macrocosm since Being is a single reality governed by contrary and variegated names. The modes of Being are the manifestations of the Supreme Name *Allah*, which is the totality of divine names before their differentiation. This name collectively encompasses all realities, whereas the other names relate to essences through their particular ontological horizons.

Correspondences of the Three Books

Just as there are correspondences between the macrocosm and the microcosm, there are correspondences between the three books of God, according to another division. These books are the existential, the written and the comprehensive, referring to the world, scripture, and the human being, respectively. A book is anything upon which there is inscription, whether it is material, sensory, imaginal or intellectual. The human being is also a book because there is an inscription of ideas, thoughts, intentions, imaginings and deeds on every inward and outward human plane. The Qurʾān alludes to this in the verse, "Read your book! Your soul suffices as a judgment against you this day" (17:14).

Since man is God's vicegerent and the comprehensive being, he abides above the angels and encompasses all that is below. There are correspondences between the macrocosm and microcosm, such as the relationship between the Tablet and the heart, or the Pen and the intellect, and so on, as Qayṣarī writes:

> Since you have come to know that the human reality has particular manifestations in the cosmos, know that there are summarized manifestations in the human world. The first such manifestation is the form of the immaterial spirit which corresponds to the form of the Intellect. Then, the form of the heart corresponds to the form the Universal Soul.[20] Then, the form of the animal soul corresponds to universal nature[21] and the Soul Imprinted on Celestial Bodies and others. Then,

> the subtle ethereal spirit which the physicians call the animal spirit, corresponds to universal prime matter.[22]
>
> Then, the form of blood corresponds to the form of the Universal Body. Then, the form of the limbs corresponds to the body of the Great World. Thus, it is through these descending degrees of manifestations on the human plane the correspondence between the two replicas is achieved.[23]

Because the form of every reality is found within man, he can know existence through the correspondences between those realities and his soul. In the terminology of the Qurʾān, these are the "signs on the horizons" which refers to outer existence, or the book of creation (*al-kitāb al-takwīnī*) and the "signs in the self," which is the book of the soul (*al-kitāb al-anfusī*). Both convey the Truth as mentioned in the verse, "We will show them Our signs in the horizons and in themselves, until it is clear to them that He (or it) is the Truth" (41:53).

These two existential books correspond with the written book (*al-kitāb al-tadwīnī*), the Qurʾān,[24] which is divine manifestation in the form of speech, as Imām ʿAlī states, "He has manifested Himself to His servants in His speech, without their having seen Him."[25] The Qurʾān contains the quintessence of all realities and the message of every previous scripture. The Prophet states, "God, the Almighty, has not revealed a verse except that it possesses an outward and inward [dimension]."[26] Describing the Qurʾān, Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> The Qurʾān reveals all the knowledge contained in previous scriptures and contains what they do not. He who has been given the Qurʾān has been given perfect light which comprises every knowledge, "We have not left out anything" (6:38). It is the mighty Qurʾān because, "Falsehood neither approaches it from the front nor from behind" (41:42), and thus, it is correct [to say] that Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him, was given the "comprehensive words" (*jawāmiʿ al-kalim*).[27]

One who comprehends God's written book is also able to understand the existential book, which are His outward signs. Conversely, one who realizes the outwards signs is able to read the inward signs as the outward corresponds to inward, spiritual significances. The Qurʾān only reveals itself when there exists a correspondence between the reader and the verse (*āyā*)—which literally means "sign" in Arabic. These divine signs are mirrored in the external world and the book of the soul. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes in *Inshāʾ al-dawāʾir*:

> Man is two replicas, an outward replica and an inward replica. His outward replica corresponds to the world in its totality, and his inward replica corresponds to the degree of Divinity. Thus, man is the universal,

> absolutely and in reality, since he is the vessel for all entities, eternal and contingent. No other being besides him can be the vessel for the entities since individual parts of the world are not the vessels for divinity, and divinity and servanthood are contraries.[28]

The soul's book has both an active and passive dimension. Divine words can be read in it or through it. When words originate from the perfected heart, it is God speaking through the servant. The Prophet, therefore, is the "speaking Qurʾān"[29] and the spirit behind its words. His character was the mirror of the divine attributes as God affirmed in the verses, "He does not speak out of desire; it is only revelation inspired to him" (53:3). The wife of the Prophet, ʿĀʾisha, reports, "Verily, the character of the Prophet of God was the Qurʾān,"[30] and the Qurʾān says, "You stand on an exalted character!" (68:4). Metaphorically speaking, God's word is the "descending" Qurʾān and Prophetic word is the "ascending" Qurʾān.

The speech of the Prophets and saints is an expression of the divine character which culminates in wisdom, "Whoever makes himself sincere for God for forty days, wellsprings of wisdom emerge from his heart onto his tongue."[31] Rather, God speaks through them in word and deed, as they mirror the divine attributes.

The Mirror of God

Existence is the mirror for the Face of God. The Face is the divine Ipseity (*huwiyya*) permeating existence as the face is the identity of a thing. The names and attributes are its perfections reflected in the mirror of existence. Thus, existence is both the image and the medium, and the Sufis say that there is nothing in existence except God, affirmed by the verse, "Wheresoever you turn, there is the Face of God" (2:115). Being is both the form and the meaning, the mirror and the image within it.

Man is also God's reflection for "God created Adam in His form," and the mirror which displays the image. Thus, he may be seen as both the reflection and the medium through which God manifests; he is the isthmus between God and the world. The hadith reports that "the faithful is a mirror of the faithful."[32] Faith is attributed to both man and God, "He is *Allah*, there is no god but He, the Holy (*al-quddūs*), the Peace (*al-salām*) and the Faithful (*al-muʾmin*)" (59:23). Yet, in the *Fuṣūṣ*, it is clear that Ibn al-ʿArabī refers to the world as the mirror in which God's reflection—the human being—is made manifest. Thus, the unpolished mirror of creation is made brilliant through the existence of man as Ibn al-ʿArabī writes, "It was necessitated that the mirror of the world be polished, so Adam became the burnish of that mirror, and the spirit behind the form."[33] Jāmī explains:

> Without the existence of Adam, [the world] was a harmonious body and sound constitution but without spirit. To clarify, the original aim and

> rationale for creating the world was to acquire perfection of the clear and the manifest (*al-jalāʾ wa-l-istijlāʾ*),[34] which is the theophany of His Essence and His vision in every aspect of His Essential knowledge. It is a manifestation that has a specific individuation according to His wisdom.[35]

The Arabic terms *al-jalāʾ wa-l-istijlāʾ* refer to theophany and self-disclosure of the divine image being reflected in the human mirror. The human being is the comprehensive mirror, and its spirit is the ontological isthmus in creation, reflecting the divine attributes in totality on the plane of actuality.

The polished mirror actually refers to the heart, as Michel Sells notes, "The divine attributes come into actuality in the polished mirror. The attributes are actualized at the point of intersection of human and divine, cosmologically in the role of Adam as the polishing of the mirror, mystically in the polishing of the mirror of the heart that occurs in mystical union or *fanāʾ*,"[36] as the famous hadith says, "For everything there is a polish. The polish for the heart is invocation."[37] Ibn Sīnā also uses the image of the polished mirror to describe the soul adorned with virtues:

> it then becomes a polished mirror upon which the forms of things are reflected as they are in themselves without any distortion, and whenever it stands face to face with them having been purified through knowledge, there ensues an automatic practicing of the theoretical and philosophical sciences.[38]

The human being is the mirror, yet he is also the burnish and the spirit behind the form. Jāmī explains in the following selection from his *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*:

> God reveals Himself upon the mirror of the heart of the Perfect Human—who is His vicegerent. The reflections of the lights of those theophanies from the heart's mirror emanates to the rest of creation and subsists through this emanation. As long as the Perfect Human remains in it, the entities receive God's theophany of Essence and both types of mercy—*raḥmān* and *raḥīm*—and the entities are the loci of manifestations and the place where the Merciful ascends (*istiwā*). Thus, the world subsists through this grace, emanation and theophany as long as the Perfect Human remains within it. No spiritual reality (*maʿnā*) becomes manifest except through his governance, and nothing appears outwardly from the inward except through his command. Even if the Perfect Human has states where he is overcome by his human aspect, he is still the isthmus between the two seas and the border between the two worlds, indicated by the verse, "He let the two adjoining seas flow, yet between them is a barrier [preventing] them from transgressing" (55:19–20).[39]

Notes

1 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 48.
2 I asked Abū Jaʿfar (al-Ṣādiq) concerning that which is narrated, that God created Adam in His form. He replied, "It is a form that was originated and created. He elected it and chose it over all the other different forms and attributed it to Himself, in the same way that He has attributed the Kaʿba and the Spirit (*rūḥ*) to Himself, saying: 'My House' (2:125, 22:26), and 'I breathed into Him of My Spirit' (15:29, 38:72)." Kulaynī, *al-Kafi*, 1:134.
3 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 50.
4 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 181.
5 Kāshānī, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 347.
6 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 147.
7 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 43–44.
8 Qūnawī, *Fukūk*, 185.
9 Ṣadūq, *Tawhīd*, 184.
10 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 89.
11 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 383.
12 Prostration in the context of this verse means obedience, not worship.
13 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 55.
14 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Inshāʾ al-dawāʾir*, 21, cited in Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 106.
15 The Supreme Spirit is the reality of the Muḥammadan light as referred to by the hadith, "The first thing that God created was my light," and the levels of existence are the individuations of that light.
16 Chittick, *The Self-Disclosure of God*, 304.
17 Qūnawī, *Fukūk*, 186.
18 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 183.
19 Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 111.
20 The heart is the place of reflection whereas the Universal Soul has no such ability. See Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* (I 260:18). Murata writes, "In the view of the Ikhwān al-Ṣāfāʾ nature is the 'faculty' or 'power' or 'strength' of the Universal Soul, which is the 'spirit of the cosmos.'" Murata, *The Tao of Islam*, 209. See also Nasr, *Islamic Cosmological Doctrines*, 66–75.
21 The word *ṭabīʿa* (nature) derived from the root letters *ṭ-b-ʿ*, which means to imprint, impress or seal. Just as the Intellect imprints on the Universal Soul in the macrocosm, the spirit imprints upon the heart in the microcosm.
22 Universal prime matter is pure undifferentiated potentiality in the material world.
23 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 187.
24 The Qurʾān derives its name from the root letters, *q-r-ʾ*, which means "to gather or collect," as in water gathering in a pool in the sense that it is the collectivity of the fruits of all the heavenly books. It may be said that the root means "to recite," "to combine" or "evidence and indication" as in *qarāʾin*. The Qurʾān is also called *al-Furqān* (Criterion), *al-Kitāb* (Book), *al-Tanzīl* (Revelation), *al-Zikr* (Reminder).
25 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 147, 204; See *Mizān al-ḥikma*, 8:3326, no. 16417.
26 Muttaqī Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl fī sunan al-aqwāl wa-l-afʿāl* (Beirut, 2017), no. 2461.
27 Ibn ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 2:105 (II.107.20).
28 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Inshāʾ al-dawāʾir*" in *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 148.
29 The statement, "I am the speaking Qurʾān" (*anā qurʾān al-nātiq*) is attributed to Imam ʿAlī.
30 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, no. 1343; Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 746.
31 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2:16.

32 Abū Dāwūd, *Sunan*, no 4918.
33 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 49.
34 Kāshānī says, "*al-jalāʾ* is the manifestation of the Essence for Itself in Itself, and *al-istijlāʾ* is the manifestation of the Essence for Itself in something else." Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 64.
35 Jāmī, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, 85.
36 Michael Sells, *Mystical Language of Unsaying* (Chicago, 1994), 84. See also Cyrus Zargar, *The Polished Mirror: Storytelling and the Pursuit of Virtue in Islamic Philosophy and Sufism* (London, 2017).
37 Aḥmad b. Husayn Bayhaqī, *Shuʿab al-īmān* (Riyadh, 2003), 1:396 503. 319
38 See Dimitri Gutas, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition*, 198.
39 Jāmī, *Naqsh al-Fuṣūṣ*, 89.

9 The Existential Circle

Divine manifestation occurs in two grand movements known as the Arc of Descent (*al-qaws al-nuzūlī*) and the Arc of Ascent (*al-qaws al-ṣuʿūdī*), according to the Qurʾānic description of Prophet Muḥammad's state, "He was within two bows' length (*qawsayn*) or nearer" (53:9).[1] The two bows represent two arcs or semicircles which together represent the circle of existence. The Arc of Descent describes the emanation from a single point and ontological unfolding of Being, and the Arc of Ascent as man's spiritual journey back to God, commonly referred to as the Origin and Return (*al-mabdaʾ wa-l-maʿād*) in Islamic philosophy. Just as there is a macrocosmic origin and return, there is a microcosmic origin and return. In the microcosm, the existential circle represents the spirit's origin from the divine Spirit then the soul's return back to God, as the Qurʾān states, "To you Lord is the return" (96:8).

Since the universe enters into existence from the Singularity to the point of greatest multiplicity in prime matter, it returns to oneness through the human being's spiritual ascent and perfection. Qūnawī says, "The governing properties of existence, realities and the degrees of created things are circular, and the movements of intellectual, sensible and other universals and their requisites are also circular."[2] Ibn al-ʿArabī states:

> The affair proceeds from God and returns to Him. From Him it begins and to Him it goes back … This does not happen linearly, or it would never go back to Him, but it does go back. Thus, there is no escape from circularity in the spiritual and sensory domains.[3]

The outward human frame is the final stage in creation, succeeding the plants, animals and minerals. Dwelling in extreme multiplicity, the human form is the furthest point from divine unity. However, man's inner reality remains divine, allowing him to journey from existential lowness characterized by this multiplicity and composition toward Comprehensive Unity (*al-aḥadiyyat al-jamʿ*). Qūnawī writes in *al-Fukūk*:

> If man reaches the highest stage of his wayfaring and unites with the Souls and Intellects, and traverses them in their essential states until he

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> reaches the station of the "isthmus" (*barzakhiyya*), which is his original station after departing from the utmost extreme of multiplicity and its forms, he will also reach the Unity of this multiplicity, then the *barzakhī* state … Thus, one who reaches his original nature is the one whom "We created in the best form" (95:4), and one who does not is the one whom "We brought down to the lowest of the low" (95:5), for being distant, due to his multiplicity, from his original station of divine Oneness.[4]

The first point on this circle is known as the singularity of the Muḥammadan Reality (*al-haqīqat al-Muḥammadiyya*), also referred to as the Muḥammadan Light (*al-nūr al-Muḥammadī*) and the First Intellect. Āshtiyānī remarks that the "Essence with respect to its attribute of real singularity, necessitates an individuation, sometimes referred to by the Sufis as the first individuation and sometimes referred to as the Muḥammadan Reality."[5] Ibn al-ʿArabī describes Prophet Muḥammad's primacy and finality in the final chapter of the *Fuṣūṣ*:

> His is the wisdom of singularity because he is the most perfect existent of this human species, which is why the matter begins with him and ends with him, for he was a prophet while Adam was between clay and water. Then, in his elemental form, he became the Seal of the Prophets.[6]

Commenting on this passage, Qayṣarī says:

> It is the wisdom of singularity because of his singularity in the degree of divine Comprehensiveness, above which is nothing except the degree of the singular Essence. This is because it is the locus of the name *Allah*, which is the greatest, all-comprehensive name amongst all the names and attributes.[7]

Further insight can be gleaned from Kāshānī where he writes, "The knowledge of the most Perfect Human being, the one who was individuated through the first individuation, is the person of Muḥammad; his gnosis is the most complete."[8] The Perfect Human and the Muḥammadan Reality both refer to complete manifestations of the comprehensive name *Allah*. Each represents the complete divine mirror, the totality of the divine attributes and perfections through which creation subsists. However, the Muḥammadan Reality describes man in terms of his primordiality and the Perfect Human in terms of his finality.[9] Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> The spirit attributed to God is the Muḥammadan Reality[10] … The Muḥammadan Reality arises out of the Light of Absolute Plenitude (*al-anwār al-ṣamadiyya*) in the dwelling of Singularity … The Muḥammadan Reality was endowed with existence, and then out of it He drew the Universe.[11]

Furthermore, Adam refers to man's origin and potential and the Muḥammadan Reality refers to the actuality of the Perfect Human. Thus, Prophet Muḥammad is the realization of "God created Adam in His form," and the ontological reality of the Perfect Human. "He precedes all the prophets with respect to reality and follows them with respect to form, as he said, 'We are the last, the first.'"[12]

The Muḥammadan Reality

It was mentioned earlier that the divine names and attributes have properties and manifestations in every world. Each name has a dominion and period of governance. When its period expires, it becomes subsumed under the governance of another name. However, the Supreme Name *Allah* governs every world in every period and the Muḥammadan Reality is the locus of that name, as it is the first individuation from the Presence of Singularity. Qayṣarī writes:

> The first thing to emanate from the Holiest Emanation among the entities was his Permanent Archetype, and the first thing to exist outwardly through the Holy Emanation was his sanctified spirit, just as he said, "The first thing that God created was my light." So, he came to be through the Singular Essence, the degree of Divinity and his Permanent Archetype, which was the first singularity.[13]

Since the Muḥammadan Reality is the manifestation of the name *Allah*, its governance also extends in every realm and every period. Its lordship governs every manifestation, as Qayṣarī writes, "The Muḥammadan Reality is the form of the comprehensive divine name (*al-ism al-jāmiʿ al-ilāhī*), which is its Lord; from it all other names receive emanation and assistance."[14]

Just as the name *Allah* lords over the rest of the divine names, the Muḥammadan Reality lords over the forms of the worlds. The term "lord" (*al-rabb*) refers to the divine name of the Essence that possesses a relationship with creation. Lordship includes ownership, possession, leadership, bestowal, nurturing, management of affairs and bringing things to their perfection.[15] It applies to the Muḥammadan Reality since its lordship is a shadow of the Lordship of the Essence which permeates all of existence. Jāmī writes:

> His lordship of the world is through the divine attributes that correspond to his [true] station, and his incapacity, poverty and every deficiency of contingency is the aspect of his humanness, which is a consequence of the limitation and descent into the lower world. Thus, his manifest aspect accords with the external world and his inward aspect accords with the hidden.[16]

The Muḥammadan Reality is the first to receive divine emanation from the degree of Singularity. It is the first emanation, the comprehensiveness reality

through which all emanation proceeds. In the hierarchy of Being, the higher encompasses the lower: the mineral kingdom is subordinate to the vegetal, the vegetal kingdom is subordinate to the animal and the animal kingdom is subordinate to man, as the Qurʾān states, "He has subjected all that is in the heavens and the earth for your benefit, as a gift from Him" (45:13).

Since man is the vicegerent of God, he is ontologically higher than all, including the angels and the Jinn. Within the species of man, the prophets are ontologically higher than the rest of humanity and are commissioned to guide humanity to perfection. Among the prophets, the "resolute ones" (*ūlu-l-ʿazm*)[17] are ontologically higher than the rest, and Muḥammad—peace and blessings be upon him— is the leader and guide of them all, and therefore, possesses absolute lordship. Qayṣarī writes:

> This lordship is achieved by giving everything its due and bestowing whatever the world needs. This would not be possible without [possessing] complete power and every divine attribute, so he possesses every divine name, employing them in this world, each according to his receptivity.[18]

It is for this reason that the Muḥammadan Reality must actualize every divine attribute in every world. Āmulī clarifies the relationship between the absolute lordship of the Muḥammadan Reality and the rest of the prophets:

> Every prophet from Adam to Muḥammad is a manifestation of the prophethood of the Supreme Spirit, for its prophethood is essential and eternal, and the prophethood of [its] manifestations is accidental and interrupted, except for the prophethood of Muḥammad, for it is eternal and uninterrupted."[19]

Qayṣarī states:

> This lordship is the aspect of its reality, not the aspect of its humanness, because in the latter, it is a servant, lorded over and in need of its Lord, as the Almighty indicates in His saying, "Say, I am only a man like you, receiving revelation" (18:110).[20]

Therefore, his reality possesses two aspects, an aspect of divinity and an aspect of servitude. The latter is that of contingency, his descent into the phenomenal world and the appearance of his reality in the manifest realm. Qayṣarī says:

> Hence, his lordship over the world is through the divine attributes which he possesses with respect to his station, and his inability, neediness, and whatever the imperfections of contingency necessitate with respect to his humanness, is acquired from the limitations and descent into the lower

> world. His outward existence encompasses the specifics of the external world and his inward existence encompasses the specifics of the hidden world, so that he is the *gathering of the two seas* and the *manifestation of the two worlds*. His descent is also his perfection, just as his ascent to his original station is his perfection, for deficiencies are also perfections from another perspective; this is understood by one whose inner being and heart is illuminated by divine light.[21]

The actions that he performed in the world also have spiritual significance, such as weeping due to his separation from God or his heart's constriction when dealing with the hypocrites.[22] He is the comprehensive isthmus between the phenomenal and spiritual worlds and thus the "gathering of the two seas" (55:19).

The Pole (*al-quṭb*)

As mentioned previously, the Perfect Human is the vicegerent of God who is the manifestation of all the divine names, referred to by the verse, "We taught Adam all the names" (2:31). As for the vicegerency of the Muḥammadan Reality, it is necessitated by God for all times because of the need for a vicegerent in both the hidden and manifest realms. Since the vicegerent is one who exercises power on behalf of the Sovereign, he must possess all that the Sovereign possesses. He becomes, therefore, the Pole around which existence revolves. Qayṣarī says:

> Thus, the Pole (*al-quṭb*) around which the governance of the world revolves, who is the axis of the circle of existence from pre-eternity (*al-azal*) to everlastingness (*al-abad*), is the Muḥammadan Reality, peace and blessings upon him, singular from the governance of singularity, and multiple from the governance of multiplicity.[23]

Among the various classes of spiritual people, Ibn al-ʿArabī asserts that the prophets are the highest in the hierarchy.[24] "This vicegerency in the world is incumbent upon God,"[25] as the Almighty states, "For every nation there is a guide" (13:7), and "Never has there been a nation but that a warner had been sent among them" (35:24). Thus, there must be a vicegerent at any given time, and he is called the Pole. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> The Pole is both the center of the universe, and its circumference. He is the Mirror of God and the pivot of the world. He is bound by subtle links to the hearts of all created beings and brings them either good or evil, neither one predominating.
>
> The most perfect of the Poles is the Muḥammadan Pole. The ones below him are divided hierarchically according to the rank of the Prophets whose heirs they are; for there are the heirs of Jesus, of Abraham

> and Joseph, of Noah, and so on; the position of each Pole is determined by the position of the Prophet whose heir he is, but all of them proceed from the lamp-niche (*mishkāt*) of Muḥammad. Thus, some are superior to others, but this superiority relates only to their spiritual knowledge, and there is no distinction to be made between them with regards to their office (*quṭbiyya*) and the governance of the universe (*tadbīr al-wujūd*).[26]

Although each prophet is a vicegerent of God, their vicegerency is governed by only some of the divine names; each is limited by a specific ontological horizon. Furthermore, since

> the manifestation of perfections of that reality in a single instance was not possible, it appeared in specific forms, each [appearing] at a level suitable to the people of that moment and time, according to the display of perfection necessitated by the name Time (*al-dahr*).[27] These are the forms of the prophets—peace be upon them.[28]

Some are manifest prophets such as Abraham and some are hidden saints such as Khiḍr, who lived during the time of the manifest prophethood of Moses. Khiḍr was governed by the Hidden and Moses by the Manifest. The Muḥammadan Vicegerency, however, is present in both Moses and Khiḍr since it governs both Hidden and Manifest realms, its reality being the Supreme Spirit and the locus of manifestation of all the divine names. Qayṣarī writes:

> Thus, when it is said in the Qurʾān, "We do not differentiate between any of the messengers" (2:285), it means that each messenger is a manifestation of the Supreme Spirit, which is a single all-encompassing reality. Just as every divine name is ontologically one with every other name, the prophets are ontologically united with the Supreme Spirit.

However, just as the names differ with respect to their properties, governances, periods and degrees of inclusiveness, the prophets differ in degrees according to the governing properties of their names, as the Qurʾān states, "These are the messengers, some of whom We exalted over others. Among them were those to whom God spoke, and He raised some of them in degree" (2:253). This is why the scripture and Laws of previous messengers was abrogated, whereas the Qurʾān and its Law remain in effect until the end of time. Thus, Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> That is why the whole affair began with him and was sealed with him … He is the most perfect proof of his Lord since was given the comprehensive speech, which are the named things of the names taught to Adam.[29]

The Muḥammadan Reality is the spirit flowing through each prophet, linking Adam with the Muḥammad, who is the first in meaning and last in form, joining the two Arcs of the existential circle. After the circle of prophethood is complete, there remains only sainthood (*al-wilāya*), which must also terminate before the Greater Resurrection, as Qayṣarī says:

> After the cessation of prophethood—I mean legislative prophethood—because of the completion of its circle and the emergence of sainthood (*al-wilāya*) from the hidden, Pole-hood (*quṭbiyya*) is categorically transferred to the saints, where there exists one in its place who maintains it to preserve this chain and order.[30]

Notes

1 This is in reference to Prophet Muḥammad's arrival at the highest station of proximity to God during his ascension (*miʿrāj*). See Mohammad Rustom, "Ibn ʿArabī on Proximity and Distance: Chapters 260 and 261 of the *Futūḥāt*," *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn ʿArabi Society* 41 (2007): 93–107.
2 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 121.
3 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 3:119 (III 119.31).
4 Qūnawī, *Fukūk*, 187.
5 Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 687.
6 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 214.
7 Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 2:1327.
8 Kāshānī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, Beirut 2007, 321.
9 Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 71.
10 The Qurʾān says, "He fashioned him and breathed into him of His Spirit" (32:9).
11 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *ʿAnqā Mughrib*, 36–41, trans. M. Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Cambridge, 1993), 69.
12 Āmulī, *Asrār al-sharīʿa*, 277.
13 Qayṣarī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 2:1327.
14 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 189.
15 Ḥusayn Hamadānī Durūdābādī, *Sharḥ al-asmāʾ al-ḥusna* (Qum, 2000), 96.
16 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 288.
17 The "possessors of resolve" are the five prophets who were recipients of a revealed law, Abraham, Noah, Moses, Jesus and Muḥammad, peace be upon them all. See Ḥasan Muṣṭafawī, *al-Taḥqīq fī kalimāt al-Qurʾān al-karīm* (Tehran, 1995), 8:122.
18 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 191.
19 Āmulī, *Asrār al-sharīʿa*, 277. The hadith at the end of this section is found in Muslim, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, 2:585.
20 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 191.
21 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 191.
22 Yaḥyā Kabīr, *Insān shināsī* (Qum, 2005), 149.
23 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 195.
24 Chodkiewicz discusses the types of saints in his *Seal of the Saints.*
25 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 193.
26 Ibn al-ʿArabī, "*Kitāb manzil al-quṭb*" in *Rasāʾil Ibn ʿArabī*, 250, cited in Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints*, 95–96.
27 "We know that one of the attributes of Time (*al-dahr*) is transmutation (*taḥawwul*) and fluctuation (*qalb*) and that God is time." Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt* 3:198 (III

199.2) as the Prophet states, "God said, 'The son of Adam abuses me. He curses time and I am time, for in my hand are the night and day.'" Muslim, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 2246; See Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Knowledge*, 395, n7.

28 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 193.

29 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 214.

30 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 195.

10 The Supreme Spirit in the Microcosm

Arising from the singular Essence, the divine names are the essential perfections of Being. In the macrocosm, they are the source of every existential plane and the realities contained therein. These divine perfections also converge in the microcosm, since man is the comprehensive locus of all the divine names and the vicegerent of God. In the school of Ibn al-ʿArabī, this human reality is called the Supreme Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-aʿẓam*). It is the first and proximate creation to the divine Essence, a reality belonging to God's own spirit, as He says, "When I have fashioned him and breathed into him of My Spirit" (38:72).[1] Qayṣarī writes, "Know that the Supreme Spirit, which is the human spirit in reality, is the manifestation of the divine Essence with respect to its lordship."[2] Kashānī says:

> The Supreme Spirit is the First Intellect and is also called the Supreme Pen and it has three universal, spiritual aspects: The first aspect is that it receives existence and knowledge in summary form, without an intermediary. It perceives and determines that which arrives from its origin, the degree of the Unseen. It is called the First Intellect because it is the first to perceive its Lord and the first to receive the emanation of His Being. The second aspect involves the specifics in the Guarded Tablet of that which it receives in summary form through the command, "Record My knowledge of My creation and record all that exists." This aspect is called the Supreme Pen through which knowledge is inscribed on the tablets of receptive essences, mentioned by the verse, "He taught by the Pen" (Qurʾān 96:4).[3]

The spirit is the first individuation in existence emanating from the divine Essence, possessing all of its perfections in the form of the names and attributes. In the terminology of the Sufis, it is the first manifestation of all realities on the plane of Unity, also referred to as the True Adam, the First Intellect, the Muḥammadan Reality, or the Muḥammadan Light and the Pen, as mentioned in various hadith, "The first thing that God created was my light," and "The first thing that God created was the Intellect," and "The first thing that God created was my spirit."[4] Jurjānī writes:

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> The Supreme Spirit is also called the First Intellect, the Muḥammadan Reality, the Unified Soul, the reality of the divine names and the first thing that God created in His "form". It is the greatest vicegerent, the luminous substance whose substantiveness is the manifestation of the Essence and whose luminosity is the manifestation of His knowledge. It is called the Unified Soul with respect to its being a substance and the First Intellect with respect to its being luminous.[5]

As cited earlier, the Prophet said, "When God wished to create the creation, he divided Light into four parts and from the first made the Pen, from the second the Tablet, from the third the Throne, then He divided the fourth into four parts."[6] These terms refer to the reality of the spirit in the macrocosm before its descent into the phenomenal world, where it exists without the body. In the microcosm, however, the spirit animates the body in the visible world to acquire its specific perfections and attain the knowledge of particulars.

In the microcosm, the spirit is called the heart, intellect and soul, and other terms, according to its various aspects. It is called the spirit in light of the totality of divine names and attributes it encompasses in the state of union. When it acquires knowledge of particulars in the perceptible world, it is called the heart, since the heart fluctuates between its spiritual origin and the phenomenal world. The story of Adam's creation in the Qurʾān reveals the human being's eminence through the images of clay, spirit, angel and Jinn, which are his microcosmic realities:

> When your Lord said to the angels, "I am going to create a man from clay. When I have proportioned him and breathed into him from My spirit, then fall down in prostration before him. So, all the angels prostrated, except Iblis. He became arrogant and was one of the faithless. He said, O Iblis! What prevented you from prostrating before that which I have created with My two hands? Have you become arrogant, or were you one of the exalted ones?" [Iblis] said, "I am better than him, You created me from fire and You created him from clay" (38:71–76).

The angels fell in prostration to the Supreme Spirit contained within Adam who was the manifestation of the Supreme Name *Allah*, whereas the angels were manifestations of individual divine names. According to the philosophers, "angel" also signifies "intellect," but it may also refer to the rational faculty in man.

> The intellect is an immaterial substance in essence and in actuality. It is neither a body nor bodily in nature, nor do its activities require attachment to a body. It is an immaterial substance whose association with bodies is by way of influence, not management or employment. The angel is a simple substance, possessing life, reflection and intellect.[7]

Rūmī explains, "That is why the angels prostrated themselves before Adam: his spirit was greater than their existence. After all, it would not have been proper to command a superior being to prostrate himself to an inferior one."[8] The command to prostrate was a divine trial, as Imam ʿAlī expresses:

> If God wanted to create Adam from a light whose brilliance would dazzle the eyes, whose beauty would amaze the intellects and whose fragrance would take one's breath away, He could have done so. And if He had done so, all would have bowed before him in humility, and the trial of the angels would have been lighter. But God, the Glorified, tests His creatures by hiding the real nature of things from their knowledge, in order to distinguish them through the trial, remove arrogance and keep them away from vanity.[9]

So, Adam's form was created from "clay" or matter, but his spirit was from the Spirit in God's breath. God also attributed this creation to Himself, saying "I have created with My two hands."[10] Sufi authors interpret the "two hands" of God as the attributes of Beauty and Majesty, the material and the spiritual dimensions, or the Manifest and the Hidden. Clay and spirit are at opposite ends of the spectrum: clay is pure form and spirit is pure meaning. The duality of "My two hands" refers to the duality of body and spirit, as well as the divine attributes of Beauty and Majesty within the degree of the spirit. Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> God called these two attributes the "two hands" through which He turned toward creating the Perfect Human, who brings together the realities and individuals of the world. Hence, the world is visible and the vicegerent is unseen …
>
> God brought his two hands together in Adam only to give him eminence. That is why He said to Iblis, "What prevented you from prostrating before that which I have created with My two hands?" This refers only to the fact that he brings together the two forms, the forms of the worlds and form of God, and these are the two hands of God. But Iblis was part of the world. He had not actualized this all-comprehensiveness.[11]

The human being becomes superior to the angels only when his spiritual nature gains mastery over his bodily nature, as Imam ʿAlī says:

> God Almighty composed the angels of intellect but without desire and composed the animals of desire but without intellect yet composed man of both. Thus, he whose intellect masters his desire is superior to the angels, and he whose desire dominates his intellect is worse than the animals.[12]

As for the Jinn, the Qurʾān states that they are of fiery substance, "He created the Jinn from a smokeless fire" (55:15). Iblis was a Jinn who worshipped God for eons and having attained a lofty station, he dwelled among the angels; he was thus commanded along with them to prostrate before Adam.[13] However, like the angels, he was unable to comprehend the exalted station of the Supreme Spirit. This is because the Jinn correspond to the Universal Sensory Intuition (*al-wahm al-kullī*)[14] in the macrocosm and comprehend only particulars, not universals. Sayyid Ruhollah Khomeini writes,

> This immaterial substance is the Intellect of the Great World which has been expressed by some as the first human or Adamic spirit for which Adam is its manifestation. In opposition to this luminous reality is another reality, the Universal Sensory Intuition in the absolute human, which inclines to evil and corruption by the impulse of its prime nature and natural disposition, summoning to error and devising. It is identical with the reality of the Iblis of Iblises and the Greatest Satan of which all the rest of the Iblises and Satans are a manifestation.[15]

Iblis could only see the outward form of Adam and not the all-inclusive universality of his spirit. He was intrinsically incapable of fathoming Adam's reality, so he contested God's command, arguing for the superiority of fire over clay, "I am better than him, You created me from fire and You created him from clay" (38:76). Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> When the Jinn saw [Adam's] form, one of them called Hārith was overcome with hatred towards this creation; he frowned (*tajahhama*) at seeing that Adamic form … When the command was given concerning Adam, Hārith exposed himself and refused to obey the command of his Creator to prostrate before Adam. He felt superior to Adam because of his own origin, feeling pride in his nature. He forgot the secret power of water from which God made all living things, and from which the life of the Jinn arises—something about which they are unaware.[16]

The Spirit

The following sections examine the various terms that are used in describing the degrees of the spirit in the microcosm. Just as the macrocosm contains the First Intellect, the Supreme Pen, the Universal Intellect and Universal Soul, there are corresponding manifestations in the human dimension, as Qayṣarī explains:

> Just as the Supreme Spirit possesses manifestations and names in the Great World, such as the First Intellect, the Supreme Pen, the Light, the Universal Soul and the Guarded Tablet, and others to which we have alluded insofar as the human reality is manifested through these forms in

> the Great World, it possesses manifestations and names in the Small World which is the human being, according to its manifestations and degrees, in the terminology of God's folk and others.[17]

Even if there are numerous terms to describe the inward reality of the human being, the manifestations of the Supreme Spirit are not discrete entities like physical organs. They are but a single immaterial reality described from various perspectives, in accordance with the descending degrees of manifestation in the microcosm. Qayṣarī says:

> If one considers that it is a single reality presented with these aspects and holds that it is one thing, it is correct. If, however, one considers it in all of its aspects and holds that they are separate from each other, it is also correct.[18]

Najm al-Dīn Kubrā says:

> Soul, heart and spirit give expressions to a single thing. However, soul is used when that thing is defiled and hardened, heart when it becomes purified and spirit when it gains nearness to God. Sometimes the Sufis differentiate among the realities and say that the heart is inside the soul and the spirit is inside the heart and the mystery is inside the spirit.[19]

"Spirit" is contrasted to "body" and everything nonmaterial is, in some form, spiritual. In the Qurʾān and hadith, spirit refers to the divine Spirit, the divine command, the Supreme Spirit, the Holy Spirit, Gabriel and Jesus. In Arabic, *rūḥ* (spirit) signifies breath, wind, or as the ancient natural philosophers maintained, "a subtle vaporous substance, which is the principle of vitality and of sensation and of voluntary motion, the vital principle in man, or the breath that man breathes and that which pervades the whole body."[20] The metaphysicians consider it to be an immaterial luminous substance, divested of matter and autonomous. Qayṣarī says:

> It is called "spirit" on account of its lordship over the body, the origin of sensory life and the source of emanation of the powers of the soul,[21] according to the verse, "Say, the spirit is a command from my Lord" (17:85).

Philosophers, theologians and others have attempted to explain the reality of the spirit. The Qurʾān says that the spirit is from God's command, "They ask you about the spirit. Say, 'The spirit is from my Lord's command (*amr*).[22] You have only been given a little knowledge of it'" (17:85). Commentators of the Qurʾān explain that the word "command" (*amr*) here means the world of Command (*al-ʿālam al-amr*), which is a luminous world that originates from the engendering command "Be!" It is also mentioned in the Qurʾān and the hadith to mean Gabriel, the Trusted Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-amīn*) and the Holy

Spirit (*al-rūḥ al-qudus*), the angels, the power by which the body is sustained and is living, and the human faculty of rationality through which man recognizes his selfhood.

The Qurʾān refers to the worlds of Creation and Command in the verses, "To Him belong the Creation and the Command; Glory be to the Lord of the worlds" (7:54), and "His only command when He wants a thing is to say to it 'Be!' and it is" (36:82). The former verse reveals that there is a distinction between the Command and the Creation, and that they are independent worlds. The latter verse indicates that the world of Command is immediate and without intermediaries.

Consequently, the world of Command is ontologically higher in the Arc of Descent, characterized by greater the simplicity, luminosity and proximity to essential divine unity. Since the spirit is from the world of Command, it is a unified substance, indivisible or susceptible to measure and quantity. Rāzī writes:

> Know that the human spirit belongs to the world of Command and is set apart by a proximity to God that no other creature enjoys, as was explained in preceding chapters.
>
> The world of Command consists of a world which is subject to neither amount, quantity nor measure, by contrast with the world of Creation, which is subject to these. The name of Command was given to the world of spirits because it came into being upon the command "Be!" with neither temporal delay nor material intermediary. The world of Creation also came into being upon the command "Be!", but through the intermediary of matter and the extension of days — "He created the heaven and the earth in six days" (7:54).
>
> […] The spirit is itself the matter from which the world of spirits is derived, and the world of spirits is the origin of the world of Dominion, and the world of Dominion is the source of the world of Kingship. The world of Kingship subsists, in its entirety, by the world of Dominion; the world of Dominion subsists by the world of spirits; the world of spirits subsists by the human spirit; and the human spirit subsists by God's attribute of self-subsisting.[23] "Glorified be He in Whose hand is the Dominion of all things and to Whom ye shall be returned."[24]

Thus, the spirit is simple, living, knowing, hearing, seeing and speaking through its own essence, without the use of organs or instruments. These attributes emanate from God and are unified with the reality of His Spirit. It is only when the spirit enters the phenomenal world does it employ the sense organs, having acquired the realities of every world along its trajectory in the Arc of Descent.

Although the spirit is simple, the degree of its manifestation in individuals creates types, as Imam ʿAlī describes:

> The prophets who are the foremost possess five spirits, the Holy Spirit, the spirit of faith, the spirit of strength, the spirit of desire and the

> corporeal spirit. By the Holy Spirit they were commissioned to be messengers and had knowledge of matters. Through the spirit of faith they worshipped God and did not associate anything with Him. Through the spirit of strength they fought their enemies and amended their relationships. Through the spirit of desire they took pleasure in food and married the lawful among the women. Through the corporeal spirit they moved forward and walked. The believers, who are the people of the right, possess the last four spirits, whereas the unbelievers, who are the people of the left, possess the last three, as do the animals.[25]

The Soul

When the immaterial spirit attaches and governs the body, it is called the soul (*nafs*). The soul is an intermediary reality between spirit and body. It is the confluence of their divergent properties, being governed by the side which it faces, because it "only seeks a correspondence which it has to both sides."[26]

> Since the rational soul is the comprehensive isthmus between the similar and dissimilar, the dividing line straddling the material and immaterial, it has two sides, each side resembling its world. Due to this correspondence, it is capable of knowing the existential reality of every divine name and an Intellectual World.[27]

Since the spirit possesses life, knowledge, power, speech, hearing and sight, through its receptivity, the soul actualizes these powers in the body. The spirit fertilizes the soul and vitalizes the body in the material world. The spirit is the father and the body the mother because it gives birth to the soul. However, the bodily powers are not intrinsic to the soul as they are for the spirit. It is only through the relationship between the spirit and the soul do these powers arise in the body. Thus, spirit is active and the soul is passive.

The natural philosophers have used the terms soul and spirit interchangeably. When referring to the vital substance of the vegetal realm, it is called the vegetal soul; when referring to the life-giving force of animality, it is called the animal soul; when referring to the rational dimension in man, it is called the rational soul. Qayṣarī writes:

> As for its being the "soul", it is because of its attachment and governance of the body. When vegetal activity arises through its attendants, it is called the "vegetal soul" (*al-nafs al-nabātiyya*), and when animal activity arises, it is called the "animal soul" (*al-nafs al-ḥaywāniyya*).[28]

Nasafī describes the different types of soul as levels of the spirit:

> Know that human being has a natural spirit located in the liver, on the right side. They have an animal spirit located in the heart, on the left

> side. They have a psychic spirit located in the brain. They have a human spirit located in the psychic spirit. And they have a holy spirit located in the human spirit.[29]

Imām ʿAlī also describes multiple souls, where the last two souls are equated with stages of the intellect. This illustrates that the soul, having been born of the spirit, also returns to the spirit/intellect in its inward development.

> There are four souls: the growing vegetal, the sensory animal, the sacred rational and the universal divine. The growing vegetal soul is a power originating from the four elements that begins at conception; it resides in the liver; its substance is derived from the rarified aspects of food; its activity is growth and increase. When it separates, it reintegrates with its origin and does not have independent existence.
>
> The sensory animal soul is a celestial power and instinctual fire whose origin is the celestial spheres; its genesis occurs at physical birth; its activity is life, movement, domination, worldliness and desire; it resides in the heart and separates upon deterioration.
>
> The sacred rational soul is a divine power that originates at the time of birth in this world. Its seat is true metaphysical knowledge; its substance is the intellect's affirmations; its activity is gnosis of the divine. The reason for its separation is the dissolution of the physical apparatus. When it returns to its origin it remains autonomous.
>
> The universal divine soul is a divine power, a self-subsisting simple essence; its origin is the Intellect to which it orients and returns when it becomes complete, resembling it … It is the lofty Essence of God. He who knows it will not be wretched, and he who is ignorant of it is lost and astray.[30]

Chief of the Peripatetic philosophers, Ibn Sīnā, defines the soul as, "The first perfection for the natural body possessing organs through which the functions of life are carried out, such as digestion, growth, reproduction, perception, movement, will and rationality."[31] Rooted in Aristotle's theory of the soul, he divides it into three aspects:

> One of them is the vegetal (soul), the first actualization of a natural body possessing organs in regard to reproduction, growth and nourishment. The second is the animal soul, the first actualization of a natural body possessing organs in regard to perceiving particulars and moving through will. The third is the rational soul, which can be divided into Practical faculty and Theoretical faculty, both of which are called the intellect.
>
> The Practical faculty is that which initiates actions in accordance with deliberation and intentions. It has a relationship with the animal faculty of appetite, imagination and itself. Its relationship with itself is such that, with the Theoretical Intelligence, it forms opinions concerning actions,

> as, for example, that lying is evil, and injustice is evil, but not in the way of proving them since these have been proven by pure rational premises in the books of logic. This faculty must govern all the other faculties of the body.[32]

Generally, all negative traits have been attributed to the soul, namely, "those qualities of the servant that are defective and those character traits and acts that are blameworthy."[33] The Qurʾān states clearly that "the soul, indeed, commands to evil" (12:53), and the Prophet said, "Your greatest enemy is the very soul between your two sides."[34] Imām ʿAlī said, "Struggle against your soul in obeying God, just as one fights an enemy and overcomes it. The strongest of people is one who has triumphed over his soul."[35]

Abū Ṭālib al-Makkī accounts for the soul's evils saying:

> The soul is afflicted with four diverse qualities: The first is the meanings derived from the attributes of Lordship such as arrogance, invincibility, love of praise, mightiness, and autonomy. It is also afflicted with the character traits of the satans, such as deception, cunning, envy and suspicion. It is afflicted with the nature of beasts, that is, the love of food, drink and copulation. Despite all this, it is held responsible for the qualities of servanthood, such as fear, humility and lowliness.[36]

With respect to its perfection, which is the goal of every wayfarer:

> The soul cannot reach even a single perfection without the Intellect and the effulgence of its light upon it, emanating from the light of the hidden, treasured, ancient knowledge of God. Thus, it must knock on the door of safety, disembark and take residence in the abode of nobility and the place of permanence, renouncing the urge to commit evil.[37]

Sufi authors have identified various stages of its development in the manuals of spiritual wayfaring. Adhering to the Qurʾānic typology, Qayṣarī says:

> When the animal powers dominate the spiritual powers, it is called the "commanding" (*ammāra*) [soul], however, when there is a glimmer of the heart's light from the Unseen, revealing its perfection, the rational soul's awareness of its iniquitous end and the corruption of its states, it is called the "reproachful" (*lawwāma*) [soul], since it reproaches its deeds.
>
> This degree is like a preliminary for the manifestation of the degree of the heart, because if the heart's light prevails and its dominion appears over the powers of the animal soul, the soul attains peace and is called the "tranquil" (*muṭmaʾinna*) [soul].[38]

The first station before commencing the spiritual journey is called the Commanding Soul (*al-nafs al-ammāra*), which is closest to the animal plane,

mentioned in the Qurʾān, "I do not absolve my own soul, for the soul indeed commands to evil" (12:53). Because it is immersed in animal desires, it is figuratively a human soul. Even if it exhibits human attributes, its reality animalistic, as Imām ʿAlī states, "His form is that of a human, but his heart is that of an animal."[39]

The second station is the Reproachful Soul (*al-nafs al-lawwāma*), as in the verse, "I swear by the self-reproaching soul" (75:2), whereby the light of faith flickers within it and it begins to discern good and evil, and truth from falsehood. It is reproachful because it now sees its animal self as loathsome and regrets its vile attributes and acts that are devoid of virtue.

The third station is the Inspired Soul (*al-nafs al-mulhama*), to which the Qurʾān alludes, "By the soul and Him who fashioned it and inspired it with its vices and virtues" (91:8). The Inspired Soul has openings into the Unseen and receives inspiration from both the divine and satanic hosts, it is susceptible to satanic insinuation and deception. At this stage, the need for a spiritual guide or *shaykh* is paramount because the inexperienced wayfarer traverses uncharted territory in the vast expanses of the Unseen, encountering both the divine and satanic.

The fourth station is the Tranquil Soul (*al-nafs al-muṭmaʾinna*), "O tranquil soul, return to your Lord contented, and pleasing to Him" (89:27–28), whereby it has become tranquil, composed and secure from the incessant promptings of its lower nature. It is the first stage of the soul's perfection.

The fifth and sixth stations can be gleaned from the same verse, so the fifth station is the Contented Soul (*al-nafs al-rāḍiya*), because in beholding divine Beauty, it becomes content due to witnessing divine attributes in itself.

The sixth station is the Pleasing Soul (*al-nafs al-marḍiyya*), since it has now earned divine pleasure and returns to humanity for their edification, guiding them to their individual perfections.

The seventh station is the Perfected Soul (*al-nafs al-kāmila*), which is the station of spiritual guardianship and the Pole of existence.

The Heart

When the soul's receptivity becomes complete and the powers of its light and luminosity are strengthened, realizing its potential, it becomes the mirror of divine theophany and is called the "heart."[40] Qayṣarī defines the heart in the following:

> As for its being the "heart", it is on account of its fluctuation between the side that faces God, thereby receiving lights from Him, and the side that faces the animal soul, emanating that which it receives from its Creator, in accordance with its capacity.[41]

Of the various aspects of the spirit, no other has greater significance from the point of view of the Qurʾān and hadith than the heart.[42] This is

because the heart is the center of man's consciousness, his innermost reality and the organ of spiritual vision through which God is known, as numerous hadith state, "Every servant has two eyes in his heart. They are unseen and by them he sees the Unseen. If God wishes well for a servant, he opens the eyes of his heart so that he sees what is hidden from his eyesight,"[43] and "The heart has two eyes like the body. He sees with the outward eye the visible [world] and sees the inward and realities by the eye of truth which is the inward [eye]."[44] "Verily, in the body is a piece of flesh which, if sound, the entire body is sound, and if corrupt, the entire body is corrupt. Truly, it is the heart."[45]

The root meaning of the term *qalb* (heart) is to overturn, to return, to go back and forth, to fluctuate and to undergo transformation. As its name suggests, the heart has two aspects, one that faces the spirit and one that faces the corporeal body.[46] The aspect that faces the body is called the soul and the aspect that faces the spirit is called the intellect. That which the heart acquires from the spirit are universals, and that which it acquires from the soul and its faculties are particulars.

As the soul straddles the spirit and the body, the heart is positioned between the spirit and the soul, as Kāshānī describes:

> The heart is a luminous, disengaged substance between the spirit and the soul, and through it, true humanity is realized. The philosophers refer to it as the rational soul. The spirit is the inward dimension, and the animal soul is its mount and its outward, halfway between it and the body. The Qurʾān compares the heart to a glass and a shining star, while it compares the spirit to a lamp, "The allegory of his light is a niche within which is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass, as it were a shining star; lit from a blessed olive tree that is neither of the East nor the West" (24:35). The tree is the soul, the niche is the body and the heart is the intermediate reality in existence and in levels of descent, like the Guarded Tablet in the world.[47]

Because of its clarity and luminosity, according to Kāshānī, "The glass is an allusion to the heart that is illumined by the spirit and illuminates everything around it by shining light upon them."[48] The Qurʾān stresses the centrality of the heart as the locus of good and evil, right and wrong, and knowledge and ignorance. It is the center of the human personality and the place of man's encounter with God. The heart is the abode of faith and piety, as mentioned in the hadith, "God does not look at your bodies or your forms, but He looks at your hearts and your deeds."[49] The human heart is the fountainhead of God's theophany. His presence is felt in the heart since it is the organ of spiritual vision, understanding and remembrance, and in the words of the hadith *qudsī*, "The heart of the believer is the Throne of God,"[50] and "Neither My earth nor heavens embrace Me, but the heart of My pure, pious servant with faith does embrace me."[51]

Qurʾānic virtues such as sincerity, piety, peace, love and repentance reside in the heart. Both spiritual cognition and moral rectitude arise from the purification of the heart, as Rūmī says, "When you look carefully, you see that all good qualities dwell in the heart. All these disgraceful qualities derive from water and clay."[52] Both the people of faith and the unbelievers have hearts. When the heart is oriented toward the mundane world and entangled in physical nature, it turns its face away from the domain of the spirit and becomes subject to spiritual disease, as indicated by the verse, "In their hearts is a sickness" (2:10), and "It is not the eyes that are blind, but blind are the hearts within the breasts" (22:45), and "They have hearts with which they do not understand, they have eyes with which they do not see, and they have ears with which they do not hear. They are like cattle; rather, they are more astray" (7:179). Conversely, when it orients itself toward the spirit's luminosity, it becomes the locus of all the divine attributes intrinsic to the spirit.

Like the spirit and the soul, the heart also has degrees and stations. Āmulī writes:

> According to some of the *shaykhs*, "The stations of the heart are four, and that is why God addressed the heart with four terms: the breast (*ṣadr*), the heart (*qalb*), the inner heart (*fuʾād*) and the intellect (*lubb*)[53]. The breast is the abode of Islam, as God says, "He whose breast He has expanded for Islam" (39:23). The heart is the abode of faith, as God says, "God has made faith lovable to you and adorned your hearts" (49:7). The inner heart is the abode of gnosis, "The inner heart did not belie what it saw" (53:11), the intellect is the abode of divine unity, as He says, "In it are signs for people of intellect" (3:187). Thus, the intellect is the vessel of divine unity, the inner heart is the vessel of gnosis, the heart is the vessel of faith and the breast is the vessel of Islam.[54]

Since the heart is both a recipient of the divine emanation and the origin of all acts in the visible world, purification of the heart is the essence of the spiritual path due to the heart's ability to reflect the images cast upon it, as Kubrā explains:

> Know that the subtle reality which is the heart, because it is subtle, fluctuates from state to state, like water taking on the color of its container. It is called the heart because it fluctuates and because it is the heart of existence and meanings. The heart is subtle and accepts the reflection of things and meanings that circle around it. The color of a thing that faces a subtle reality takes form within it, just like forms are reflected in a mirror or in pure water.[55]

Although the spirit is the manifestation of all the divine attributes, having intrinsic knowledge and awareness of divinity, the heart is superior. The heart's distinction is that it encompasses both the spiritual and the corporeal,

the hidden and the manifest, and knowledge of both universals and particulars, whereas the spirit is a divine breath without outward manifestation. The divine attributes in the spirit are in union, whereas the heart embraces both union and differentiation. Through its interaction with the visible world, it acquires knowledge of particulars while receiving the spirit's effusions. Thus, the heart straddles two dimensions, as Rāzī describes:

> One face of the human heart is turned to the world of spirituality, and the other face to the world of the bodily frame. It is for this reason that the heart is called "*qalb*", for it contains within itself two worlds, corporeal and spiritual, and constantly turns from one to the other. All sustaining grace received from the spirit is distributed by the heart.[56]

The heart is between Necessity and contingency, unity and multiplicity, born from the marriage between the spirit and the soul. Farghānī describes the birth of the heart from the existential marriage between the spirit and the soul:

> Since the aspect of activity of the spiritual spirit is stronger due to the intense connection to the Presence of Necessity and its properties manifesting within it, and the aspect of receptivity is stronger in the human, animal soul due to the intense connection to contingency and its effects of multiplicity manifesting within it, the mystery (*sirr*), the spirit (*rūḥ*) and the soul (*nafs*) each witnessed the manifestation of its own specific perfections in each other. The propensity towards perfection is an essential property manifesting in each of them due to the permeation of original love of the divine Essence.
>
> That love moved each one toward its companion. So, the spiritual spirit through its properties longed for the human soul, as the contented husband longs for his willing wife. The soul, through its properties and original faculties, longed for the spirit as the contented and pleasing wife yearns for the devoted husband. Each one of them inclines toward the other. They converge and mix with all the unitary and harmonious effects found within each, which gives birth to a child from the placenta of the soul's comprehensiveness. The child is the true heart that combines all the properties [of the parents] and those of the mystery (*sirr*). It is the discerning, righteous child who is devoted to his parents. This unitary and comprehensive heart becomes God-conscious and purified from deviation, a mirror and the manifestation of divine theophany who reveals Himself in the oneness of attributes.[57]

Once the heart has been born, like the soul, it must evolve before reaching perfection. These levels of the heart's perfection are called "faces" according to Qūnāwī:

> Know that the heart has five faces: a face turned towards its Lord, for which there is no intermediary between it and God; a face turned towards the world of spirits, from which it takes from its Lord what its capacity necessitates through the intermediary of spirits; a face specific to the Imaginal World, from which it attains a share to the extent of its relationship to the station of all-comprehensiveness, according to equanimity of its constitution and character traits, the orderliness of its states during its activity, its presence and gnosis; a face turned towards the visible world, specific to the names, the Manifest and the Last; and a comprehensive face which is specific to its comprehensive unity. It is the face that faces the station of the Ipseity, described as the First, the Last, the Manifest and the Hidden and the union of these four attributes.
>
> Each face has a manifestation in the human being. He who has the form of an all-comprehensive heart, he is like our Prophet, for his station is the center of the circle of existence. The five faces of his heart face each world, each Presence and degree, commanding the principles of each and manifest each by their qualities by the all-comprehensive face, as mentioned previously.[58]

This all-comprehensive, perfect human heart is the Throne of God in the microcosm. It is superior to the macrocosmic Throne as the human being is the spirit of the world. Rāzī explains the reason saying:

> Know that the relationship of the heart to the body is like that of God's Throne to the world. In the same way that the Throne is the plane of manifestation for the repose of the attribute of compassion in the macrocosm, so the heart is the place of manifestation for the repose of the attribute of spirituality in the microcosm … The heart, however, has a property and nobility that the Throne does not possess, for the heart is aware of receiving the Emanation of the grace of the spirit, while the Throne has no such awareness.[59]

Kāshānī's interpretation of the Verse of Light in his *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya* summarizes the relationships between the spirit, intellect, heart and soul:

> The Qurʾān compares the heart to a glass and a shining star, while it compares the spirit to a lamp. In His words, "God is the Light of the heavens and the earth. The allegory of His light is a niche, wherein is a lamp; the lamp is in a glass; the glass is like a shining star, kindled from a blessed olive tree, neither of the east nor the west" (24:35). The tree is the soul, the niche is the body. The heart is the intermediate reality in existence and in levels of descent, like the Guarded Tablet in the cosmos. The glass is an allusion to the heart that is illumined by the spirit and illuminates everything around it by shining light upon them.[60]

In the *Taʾwīlāt*, he writes:

> "The allegory of His light" is an attribute of His Being and His manifestation in the worlds, like a "niche within which is a lamp." The niche is an allusion to the body because it is dark in itself and becomes illuminated by the light of the spirit alluded to by the lamp … The glass is an allusion to the heart, illuminated by the spirit and shines light upon everything around it, like the lamp is illuminated by the flame which throws light on everything around it. God compares the glass to a shining star because of its expansiveness, exceeding luminosity, elevation and multiplicity of rays, like the heart. The tree from which the glass is kindled is the purified and pure, holy soul … Its oil is the soul's receptivity for the holy light of original nature latent within itself.[61]

Kāshānī's exegesis is a prime example of Sufi hermeneutics, a genre that focuses on the esoteric interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of the Qurʾān and relies on spiritual insight or unveiling. The term *taʾwīl* is derived from the word *awwal*, which means to return to the origin and essence. The Sufis substantiate their use of *taʾwīl* based on Qurʾānic usage, such as Khiḍr's statement to Moses, "This is the parting between you and me. Now I will inform you of the interpretation (*taʾwīl*) of those things which you were unable to bear" (18:78), and Prophetic narrations such as, "The Qurʾān has an outward aspect (*ẓahr*) and inward aspect (*baṭn*), an ending (*ḥadd*) and a place where one ascends (*muṭṭalaʿ*)."[62] Imām al-Ṣādiq says:

> The book of God Almighty has four aspects: the expression (*ʿibāra*), the allusion (*ishāra*), subtleties (*latāʾif*) and realities (*haqāʾiq*). The expression is for the layperson (*ʿawāmm*), the allusion for the elite (*khawāṣṣ*), the subtlety for the saints (*awliyāʾ*) and the reality for the prophets (*anbiyāʾ*).[63]

Returning to the Verse of Light, Kāshānī says that the "lamp-niche," which has no light of itself, is analogous to the body, which is corporeal, dark and dense. The spirit is the lamp which illuminates out of its very essence, as fire intrinsically radiates light. The glass is the heart, since it draws luminosity from the lamp and is like a bright star in its radiance and high position.

Moreover, the glass can transmit the essential luminosity of the lamp only if it is clean and translucent. Otherwise, an opaque glass veils the lamp's essential luminosity, as the glass covers the lamp. The blessed olive tree is the soul, as Kāshānī explains, for the soul has faculties and is the source of great benefit, just as branches and fruits give benefit.

The spirit is the human essence and the source of divine perfections, the heart is the locus of receptivity of the spirit's essential goodness, the soul houses the heart and the body is the soul's mount. Kashānī here is referring to the blessed soul whose original nature is formed from the spirit's radiance,

although, it is also the source of conflict, desires and bestial properties. In Kāshānī's view, the essential receptivity of the soul is governed by the divine nature of the spirit. When the spirit's luminosity and essential goodness radiate to every level of the inward realm, all bestial attributes are transformed, and all darkness is cast out.[64] It is related that Prophet David spoke with his Lord and said:

> "My Lord, every King has a treasure, where then is Your treasure?" God said, "I have a treasure greater than the Throne and vaster than the Pedestal, finer than paradise and more adorned than the Dominion (*malakūt*). Its earth is gnosis, its sky is faith, its sun is yearning, its moon is love, its stars are thoughts, its heaven is intellect, its rain is mercy, its trees are obedience, its fruits are wisdom. It has four pillars: reliance, contemplation, intimacy and remembrance; it has four doors: knowledge, action, patience and contentment. Lo, it is the heart!"[65]

The Intellect

The terms intellect and heart are used interchangeably to refer to human consciousness. The root meaning of *ʿaql* is to tie, fetter or bind, which is to tether concepts in the mind through delimiting and defining them. The Prophet states, "The intellect is a fetter against ignorance,"[66] and "The intellect is a light that God has created for mankind and has made it illuminate the heart, so he may know the difference between manifest things and unseen things."[67] Other terms Sufi authors use for the intellect include the Kernel (*lubb*), the Grain (*ḥabbat al-qalb*), the Core (*suwayda*),[68] and the Pericardium (*shaghaf*), each referring to one of its aspects.[69] Qayṣarī writes, "As for its being the 'intellect', it is because it perceives its own essence and its Originator, delimits with specific individuation and tethers what it perceives, limiting and defining the objects of its cognition."[70] Jāmī writes that the First Intellect was the first to delimit the absolute Light of Being:

> Lexically, "intellect" means to restrict, tie, or bind, which entails delimitation. The reality of God's remembrance through God—who is divested of all conditions, even the condition of absoluteness, which opposes it—contravenes the intellect, whose reality is to restrict and bind. It is for this reason that restriction and delimitation first occurred in the First Intellect, which perceived the light of absolute theophany in its specific capacity to delimit. God established it to manifest this mystery, which was to delimit. Its reality was to delimit absolute Light by saying to it, "Write!" or bind and gather My knowledge in My creation until the Day of Resurrection. That limitation was to delimit the limitation. Receiving all the infinite and eternal theophanies was reserved for the human reality, which is divine, eternal, perfect, comprehensive and unified. It is the heart of God's existence, and it has the reality of remembrance.[71]

The intellect is the faculty of understanding, cognition and rationality. Imām al-Ṣādiq says, "God created the Intellect out of four things: knowledge, power, light and volition. Then He caused it to subsist through knowledge and be eternal in the divine dominion."[72] The intellect differs from the heart in that it is the abode of thought and perception, whereas the heart is the organ of vision, faith, piety and moral attributes. The intellect seeks the highest good, discerns between truth and falsehood and abides through knowledge.

In many hadith, intellect is used synonymously with the spirit and heart. Imām al-Ṣādiq discusses the lofty station of the intellect in the following statement:

> "Know the Intellect and its soldiers—you will be guided. Know Ignorance and its soldiers—you will be guided." The listener said, "May I sacrifice myself for you! We do not know except what you have taught us." Then Abū ʿAbdallah said, "God created the Intellect—the first creature among the spiritual beings *(rūḥāniyyūn)*[73]—from the right side of His Throne. He said to it, 'Turn away from Me,' so it turned away. Then He said, 'Turn toward Me,' so it turned toward Him. Then He said, 'I have created a great creature and ennobled him above all My creation.'"[74]

Commenting on this hadith, Muḥammad Māzandarānī[75] writes:

> Light relates to the creation of the Intellect namely, its being created from His Essence without intermediary or material consideration; or it indicates the Intellect's state of nobility and honor, as in the case of Jesus, the spirit of God; or it indicates the state of spiritual beings, given that they are all luminous beings and the Intellect is the first and the best of them. Accordingly, there is evidence that the Intellect is a divine light from which God distinguishes truth from falsehood and right from wrong, just as light illuminates what is veiled by darkness. Its light emanates from the light of His Essence without the intermediary of any other luminous thing. The turbidity of dark matter does not make it turbid. Thus, if it is freed from fetters and severed from attachments, it connects with God completely. That is why it is said that distance does not exist in the spiritual world.[76]

When the spirit is engaged in thought, discernment, knowledge and truth, it is called the intellect. Āmulī also expound on the relationships between intellect, heart and spirit:

> A perfect example of this is the human spirit with respect to its corporeal manifestations. The intellect is the manifestation of His Gentle Names, whereas the soul is the manifestation of His Mighty Names. In a similar

fashion, each of his organs and faculties is the manifestation of one or other of the names, with the exception of the heart, for it is the manifestation of all the names, attributes and perfections. It is called the heart on account of its fluctuation from one form to another like man, for example, for at times, he is in the form of an animal, and other times in the form of inert matter, particularly in the Qurʾān's story of his being fashioned [out of clay]. Now the intellect, among these manifestations, is on the side of the right, whereas the soul is on the side of the left. And the side of the right here is the side that is pointed towards the spirit or towards God, may He be exalted. What is meant by it is the side of what is more sublime and nobler, such as the heavens and the world of spirits, as in the Almighty's saying, "The heavens are folded up on His right" (39:67).

Whenever the heart inclines towards the intellect and its affairs, it belongs to the people of the right, and whenever it inclines towards the soul and its judgements, it belongs to the people of the left. This is because the heart has two sides: one side towards the spirit and the intellect, and one side towards the soul and the body, as the Prophet—peace and blessings be upon him—indicates, "The heart of the believer is between the two fingers of the Merciful."[77]

The Breast

The breast is the outer aspect of the heart which faces the body and presides over it. Inspiration occurs in the heart and insinuation occurs in the breast since Satan can only reach the level of the breast, "From the evil of the whisperer who whispers in the breasts of men" (114:5). Qayṣarī writes, "As for its being the 'breast', it is with respect to the side that faces the body, for it is the source of its light and occupies the foremost position in the body."[78]

Commenting on the verse of the Qurʾān, "Did we not expand your breast?" (94:1), Tirmidhī writes, "The breast is to the heart what the shell is to the pearl. It is the place where knowledge is acquired through study, memorization and effort."[79] For this reason, it is easily affected by the distractions and desires of the body and is subject to satanic whisperings. Tirmidhī writes:

> The breast is like a courtyard of the house within a homestead. Servants, attendants, neighbors, strangers and others enter the homestead, but no one enters the house that its owner enters except a blood relative or a *maḥram*.[80] or a close relative or friend.

The breast may acquire knowledge, but he continues to say:

> This type of knowledge does not become permanent in the breast or become firmly established in it except after repetition, deep reflection and

> perseverance, for the breast is like a passageway, especially for that knowledge which is heard and which enters it from the outside. As for that which enters [the breast] from inside the heart, such as subtleties of wisdom and attestations of grace, its permanence in the breast is firmly established.[81]

The Inner Heart (*fūʾād*)

The inner heart is the seat of vision where knowledge and witnessing is combined. When one sees the realities of the Unseen by the inner heart, knowledge becomes certainty, as in God's words, "The inner heart (*fūʾād*) did not belie what it saw" (53:1). Qayṣarī says, "As for its being the 'inner heart' (*fūʾād*), it is on account of its being affected by its source, since *faʾd* lexically means 'wounded' and 'stricken.'"[82] Tirmidhī writes:

> The inner heart is the seat of vision (*ruʾya*) and the heart is the seat of knowledge. Sight is also attributed to the heart (*qalb*), although the heart sees only with the light that is within it. The Messenger of God said, "A report (*khabar*) is not like seeing [with the eyes] (*al-muʿāyana*)."[83]

Thus, on account of direct witnessing and not mere knowledge, it is called the inner heart; it is stricken by its source, unlike the outer heart.

The Mystery

Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "The mystery is the divine spirit breathed into man when he was created."[84] Qayṣarī says, "As for its being the 'mystery' (*sirr*), it is in view of the fact that none perceives His lights except the possessors of hearts and those firm in knowledge of God, to the exclusion of others."[85]

The Qurʾān says, "He knows the mystery and the hidden" (20:07), and it is called the mystery because, "The gnostic sees the divine mystery in all existence through gnosis of God and witnessing His Beauty."[86] It is a degree of witnessing higher than the inner heart, reserved for the "possessors of heart" and those "firm in knowledge," who witness God in accordance with the statement, "I did not see anything except that I saw God within it."[87] It is the aspect of lordship in man, as stated by Imam al-Ṣādiq, "Servanthood is a reality whose essence is Lordship."[88]

The Hidden

Qayṣarī says, "As for its being the 'hidden' (*khafī*), it is because its reality is concealed from the gnostics and others."[89] This is the degree in which the Sufi is annihilated in God and sees nothing but God, whereas in the previous degree, one sees God in all things. In this state, otherness is effaced. We can summarize the degrees of the heart, spirit, mystery and hidden in the following passage from Rāzī's *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*:

> The heart is the link between the corporeal and the spiritual worlds, with one aspect turned toward the world of Dominion and the other turned toward the body. Through the first aspect it receives the Emanation of the light of the intelligence, and through the second it conveys the traces of the light of the world of Dominion and of intelligibilia to the soul and the body. The mystery is likewise the link between the two worlds of the heart and spirit. With the aspect turned toward the spirit, it partakes of the Emanation of the spirit, and with the aspect turned toward the heart, it conveys the truths of the Emanation of the spirit to the heart. Similarly, the hidden is the link between the world of divine attributes and the world of spirituality. Turned to the first, it receives the unveiling of the attributes of the divine Presence; turned to the second, it conveys to the world of spirituality the reflection of those characteristics, ennobling it with "acquire God's characteristics as your own." This is known as "the unveiling of the attributes."[90]

Notes

1 In the statement "of My Spirit," the preposition "of" reveals that the Spirit is not identical to the Essence even if it arises from it.
2 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 203.
3 Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 303.
4 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 1:97, no. 7, 8.
5 Jurjānī, *Kitāb al-taʿrīfāt*, 118.
6 Muḥammad b. ʿAbd al-Bāqī Zurqānī, *Sharḥ al-Zarqānī ʿalā al-mawāhib al-laduniyya bi-l-minaḥ al-Muḥammadiyya* (Beirut, 2012), 1:55–56.
7 See the chapter on the correspondences between man and the angels in al-Majid, *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn: bāb al-firāsa*, 109–120.
8 Rūmī says, "How could God's justice and kindness allow a rose to prostrate to a thorn?" *Mathnawī*, II 3326–33, trans. W. Chittick, *The Sufi Path of Love: The Spiritual Teachings of Rumi* (Albany, 1983), 32.
9 Imam ʿAlī says, "He tested His proximate angels in order to distinguish the humble and the arrogant among them. Then, God, who knows what is hidden in the hearts and what is veiled in the unseen said, 'Verily I am about to create a human from clay … So, all the angels prostrated, except Iblis.' His bigotry stood in his way. He felt superior to Adam by virtue of his creation and became prejudiced against him on account of his origin. Thus, this enemy of God is the leader of the intolerant, and the forerunner of the arrogant. It is he who laid the foundation of bigotry, quarreled with God about the robe of greatness, put on the dress of haughtiness and took off the covering of humility. Do you not see how God made him small on account of his arrogance, low on account of his haughtiness and humiliated him for his feigning to be high? He discarded him in this world and prepared for him a burning fire in the next." ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-Balāgha: al-Khutbat al-qāṣiʿa*, 286, sermon 192.
10 "Hand" refers to power as well as blessing, and this is the same thing since God's blessings and power embrace all things. Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:70 (II 70.15).
11 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 54–55.
12 "The angels have intellect but do not reflect. Thus, they are deprived of the reward of contemplating God's handiwork and are unable to become His hearing

and His sight." ʿAbd al-Wahhāb Shaʿrānī, *Yawaqīt wa-l-jawāhir* (Beirut, 2010), 398.

13 Imam ʿAlī says, "You should take a lesson from what God did with Satan; namely, He nullified his great acts and extensive efforts on account of the vanity of one moment, although Satan had worshipped God for six thousand years—whether by the reckoning of this world or the next world is not known." ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-Balāgha: al-Khutbat al-qāṣiʿa*, 286, sermon 192.

14 The faculty of sensory intuition (*al-wāhima*) contrives ways to deceive and plot, arriving at certain ends through deception and cunning. The difference between the terms "sensory intuition" (*al-wāhima*), "imagination" (*al-khayāl*) and "fantasy" (*al-mutakhayyila*) may be unclear. Each of these is a distinct faculty, as distinct as the faculties of intellect, anger and desire are to each other. The function of sensory intuition is to conceptualize the meanings of particulars, the function of the imagination is to perceive forms and the function of the fantasy is to synthesize and segregate between the two. See the chapter on the correspondences between man and Satan in al-Majid, *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn: bāb al-firāsa*, 136.

15 Rūḥollāh Khomeinī, *Junūd al-ʿaql wa-l-jahl*, ed. A. Fihrī (Beirut, 2001), 19.

16 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:185 (I:133.24). Ibn al-ʿArabī discusses the Jinn in chapter nine of the *Futūḥāt*. This section has been translated by Gracia López Anguita, "On the Inner Knowledge of Spirits Made of an Igneous Mixture" in *Journal of the Muhyiddin Ibn Arabi Society* 44 (2008): 1–25.

17 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 203.

18 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 211.

19 Najm al-Dīn Kubrā, *Fawāʾiḥ al-jamāl wa fawāʾiḥ al-jalāl*, ed. Y. Zaydān (Cairo, 1993), 170.

20 E.W. Lane, *An Arabic-English Lexicon*, 1180.

21 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 205.

22 Alternatively, "*ʾamr rabbī*" can be read as, "The spirit is a divine affair."

23 The Self-subsisting (*al-qayyūm*) is one of the attributes of the Essence.

24 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 220.

25 Muḥsin Fayḍ Kāshānī. *al-Ḥaqāʾiq fī maḥāsin al-akhlāq* (Qum, 2002), 362.

26 Sabzwarī, *Sharḥ al-manẓūma*, 1:187 citing Qūnawī's *Mafātiḥ al-ghayb*, 95.

27 Cited in Al-Mājid, *al-Khalq al-jadīd*, trans. M. Ali, *The New Creation*, 178.

28 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 209.

29 ʿAzīz al-Dīn Nasafī, *Kitāb al-insān al-kāmil*, ed. H. Corbin (Tehran, 1980), 95.

30 Kāshānī, *al-Ḥaqāʾiq fī maḥāsin al-akhlāq*, 363.

31 Ibn Sīnā, *al-Ishārāt wa-l-tanbīhāt*, ed. S. Dunyā (Cairo, 1971), 2:290–291.

32 Ibn Sīnā and Fazlur Rahman, *Avicenna's De Anima (Arabic Text), Being the Psychological Part of Kitab al-Shifāʾ* (London, 1959), 46.

33 Qushayrī, *al-Risāla al-Qushayriyya fī ʿilm al-ṭaṣawwuf*, ed. M. Zurayq (Beirut, 2001), 305.

34 Rayshahrī, *Mizān al-ḥikma*, 6:2439.

35 Āmidī, *Ghurar al-ḥikam*, no. 4761.

36 Makkī, *Qūt al-Qulub*, 159 (chapter 25).

37 Al-Mājid, *al-Khalq al-jadīd*, trans. M. Ali, *The New Creation*, 180.

38 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 209.

39 ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, *Nahj al-balāgha*, sermon 87, 119.

40 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 209.

41 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 207.

42 There are over one hundred references in the Qurʾān on the heart. See Nasr, *The Essential Seyyed Hossein Nasr*, ed. W. Chittick (Bloomington, 2007); See also chapter ten on the heart in Murata's *The Tao of Islam*.

43 Hindī, *Kanz al-ʿummāl*, no. 3043.

44 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 581.
45 Muslim, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 1599.
46 Jāmī writes, "Know that *qalb* (heart), *qubul* (receive) and *qābiliyya* (receptivity) are related semantically and morphologically. As for the former, receptivity is to receive the forms of theophany. As for the latter, were it not for the rearrangement of letters they would all be the same word. Furthermore, grammatically, to rearrange a letter (*qalb*) is to put the first at the end, etc., in the singular or plural. Thus, rearranging the word '*qalb*' results in the words '*qubul*' and '*qābiliyya*.'" Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 205.
47 Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 162.
48 Kāshānī, *Taʾwīlāt*, 2:75.
49 Muslim, *Saḥīḥ*, no. 2564.
50 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 55:39.
51 Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn* 3:1.5; 3:12; Kāshānī, *Maḥajjat al-bayḍāʾ*, 5:26.
52 Rūmī, *Dīwān 4220*, trans. W. Chittick, *Sufi Path of Love*, 37.
53 *Lubb* means kernel, core and innermost consciousness.
54 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 582.
55 Kubrā, *Fawāʾiḥ al-jamāl*, 132–133.
56 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 202–203.
57 Saʿīd al-Dīn Farghānī, *Muntahāʾ al-madārik*, ed. I. al-Kayyali (Beirut, 2007), 1:133.
58 Qūnawī, *Fukūk*, 246–250. See also Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 200–201.
59 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 201.
60 Kāshānī, *Iṣṭilāḥāt al-ṣūfiyya*, 167–168.
61 Kāshānī, *Tafsīr Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 2:75.
62 Ghazālī, *Iḥyāʾ ʿulūm al-dīn*, 1:254.
63 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 92:95.
64 See Kāshānī's commentary on the Verse of Light in *Tafsīr Ibn al-ʿArabī*, 1:74.
65 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 513.
66 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 1:117.
67 Aḥsāʾī, *ʿAwālī al-laʾālī*, 1:248, no. 4.
68 Literally, "small black (spot)."
69 See Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 209.
70 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 207.
71 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 205.
72 Muḥammad Rayshahrī, *Mizān al-ḥikma*, 7:2688.
73 "*Rūḥānī* (spiritual) is a singular adjective and *rūḥāniyyūn* is plural with a *dhamm* on the *rāʾ* on both and the *alef* and *nūn* to indicate the adjectival form. Abū ʿUbayda says that any place that is pleasant and spacious is *rawḥānī*, with the *fatḥa*. *Rūḥāniyyūn* refers to the immaterial world, the Unseen, the world of Dominion (*malakūt*) and the World of Command (*ʾamr*), just as this world is called the sensory, material, Visible, Kingdom (*mulk*) and the world of creation (*khalq*). It may be said that the *rūḥāniyyūn* are immaterial luminous substances that are independent of bodies and physicality. If it is in need of bodies for its activity and movement, it is called the soul, otherwise it is called an Intellect, and so on. Every light is a single reality which does not differ in quiddity and accidents, but differs only in intensity, perfection, deficiency of original light and being. 'From the right of His Throne' relates to either creation or the state of the spiritual beings. The right is the stronger and nobler side than the left. Lexically, a throne is the seat of a king. Their being from the right of the Throne is emblematic of their nobility, loftiness and sublime station in comparison with the other creatures. Thus, they repose at the right-hand side of the King." Muḥammad Māzandarānī, *Sharḥ uṣūl al-kāfī* (Beirut, 2000), 1:205.
74 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 1:30–34.

75 Muḥammad Ṣāliḥ al-Māzandarānī (d. 1081/1670) is the author of a ten-volume commentary on Kulaynī's *Uṣūl al-kāfī*. He was a student of the enigmatic sage, Shaykh Bahāʾ al-Dīn ʿAmilī (d. 1030 AH/1620–21), also known as Shaykh Bahāʾī.
76 Māzandarānī, *Sharḥ uṣūl al-kāfī*, 1:206.
77 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 137–138.
78 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 207.
79 Ḥakīm Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq bayn al-ṣadr wa-l-qalb wa-l-fuʾād wa-l-lubb*, trans. N. Heer, *Three Early Sufi Texts: A Treatise on the Heart* (Louisville, 2003), 19.
80 A relative to whom it is unlawful to marry or a spouse.
81 Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 20.
82 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 207.
83 Tirmidhī, *Bayān al-farq*, 40, 30–35.
84 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 1:224 (I 168).
85 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 205.
86 Ḥasan Ḥasanzāde Āmulī, *Mumid al-himām fī sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Tehran, 1999), 54.
87 A statement attributed to Imām ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib.
88 Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharīʿa*, 7.
89 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 205.
90 Rāzī, *Mirṣād al-ʿibād*, trans. H. Algar, *The Path of God's Bondsmen*, 308.

11 Prophethood and Sainthood

The centrality of prophethood in the Islamic tradition is gleaned from the declaration of faith, the *shahāda*, which couples the profession of divine unity with prophethood. Prophethood intrinsically relates to the guidance, edification and enlightenment of the creatures. As the lexical meaning suggests, *nubuwwa* is derived from *inbāʾ*, which means to inform or apprise. Jāmī says:

> The word *nabīʾ* is in the form *faʿīl*, which denotes the agent (*fāʿil*) of the verb, *nabaʾa*, which means to report, namely, one who informs the servants about God, His Essence, names and attributes. The meaning can also reflect the passive participle (*mafʿūl*) to mean that God has informed [the prophet] of the aforementioned. A prophet is called a messenger (*rasūl*) if he is commanded to promulgate a Law (*sharīʿa*) or abrogate some laws that were in effect before him.[1]

In his commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's poem, ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Kāshānī (d. 735/1335)[2] writes:

> Prophethood (*al-nubuwwa*) means informing (*al-inbāʾ*), so the prophet is one who informs about the Essence of God, His attributes, His names, His commandments and His objectives. Real, essential and initial informing occurs by the Supreme Spirit which God has sent to the Universal Soul, initially, then the particular souls, to inform them by its intellectual language, [the knowledge of] the Singular Essence, eternal attributes, the divine names, pre-eternal commandments and solemn objectives.[3]

Qayṣarī writes that the main purpose of the manifest prophet is to guide others toward their individual perfections, "A prophet is one who is sent into creation as a guide and a teacher, leading them towards their perfection, as necessitated by their receptivities foreordained by the Permanent Archetypes in the divine knowledge."[4]

The Qurʾān mentions these various aspects in the following verse, "It is He who sent the unlettered people an apostle from among them, to recite to

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them His signs, purify them and teach them the Book and wisdom, as they were previously in clear error" (62:2).[5] In this context, His signs refer to ideological concerns such as the unity of God, knowledge of the Unseen, divine justice and Resurrection. The prophet also purifies them through moral edification,[6] teaches them the Book, which is the Law (*sharī'a*) and imparts wisdom, which refers to spiritual realities and esoteric knowledge.[7]

Thus, the role of the prophet includes four aspects, ideological, ethical, legislative and spiritual, which are inclusive of the most important areas of man's worldly and spiritual life. It is a divinely commissioned office that necessitates perfection in each of these aspects because obeying the Prophet is equivalent to obeying God, as in the verse, "Whoever obeys the Prophet has obeyed God" (4:80).

Prophethood is an appointment and a divine designation. The prophet receives this appointment through his "Permanent Archetype from the theophany that the Holiest Effusion bestows on the Archetypes in the divine knowledge."[8] Receiving from God directly, the prophet is a perfected individual with superior intellect and exemplary morality. The Prophet says:

> God has not endowed upon mankind anything better than intellect. The slumber of the intelligent is better than the waking hours of the ignorant. Comforts of the stationary life of the intelligent is better than the movement of the ignorant. God has not sent a prophet or messenger without first perfecting his intellect, and his intellect stands superior to all the intellects of his people. What is concealed in his heart of the Prophet is better than the striving of those who strive. No creature can discharge his obligations to God unless he comprehends them. No worshipper reaches the excellence in worship attained by the intelligent person. The intelligent are the "people of understanding," about whom God has said, "None takes admonition except the people of understanding" (2:269).[9]

Another aspect of divinely appointed prophethood is the ability to bring about miracles, to challenge false claims to prophethood, those that are without a divine mandate. Qayṣarī writes, "Since each manifestation sought this supreme station by striving for ascendency over the objects of its type, prophethood was coupled with exhibiting miracles and supernatural phenomena as a challenge to distinguish a true prophet from a false one."[10]

The prophets' miracles also accorded with the needs of their time. It is said,

> When Moses was sent, it was a time when magic had its sway over the people. Hence, Moses brought from God a power that they did not possess and rendered their magic powerless. This affirmed the divine proof against them. Jesus was sent at a time when the people were under the grip of chronic diseases. Hence, Jesus brought medical powers from

> God that the people of that time did not possess. Jesus brought the dead back to life and healed people born blind and the lepers, by the will of God, and thus, established the divine proof against them. God sent Prophet Muḥammad when oration and eloquent speech had tremendous sway over the people. So, he brought admonition and wisdom from God that rendered their speech powerless and established the divine proof against them.[11]

Likewise, some of the saints are endowed with the power to performs miracles. However, according to the soul's strength, both the good and the wicked participate in the supernatural.

The True Prophet

The outward function of a prophet is to guide and instruct so that people are able to attain their individual perfections according to their capacity and potential. Prophethood also has an inward reality, since Being possesses essential unity with respect to both the inward and outward. It was mentioned earlier that if only its inward is considered, then it is called the Unseen, which is the plane of unity, and if only the outward is considered, then it is called the Manifest and the plane of multiplicity. Excluding the Presence of Singularity, multiplicity is present in every world, including the divine names and attributes and the Permanent Archetypes in the divine knowledge. However, true multiplicity is the outward, visible world, accompanying individuation and form. Every world is considered manifest in relation to the one prior to it— the Kingdom (*mulk*) in relation to the Dominion (*malakūt*), the Dominion in relation to the Invincibility (*jabarūt*), the Permanent Archetypes in relation to the divine names, the divine names in relation to the degree of Singularity, and the degree of Singularity in relation to the Essence.

Multiplicity arises from the necessity of each divine name to become manifest in creation. Every name "seeks" to manifest its properties, its governance and period that is intrinsic to its reality. This multiplicity of relationships creates a conflict in the cosmos because some names have contrary properties like the names of Beauty and the names of Majesty, as Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "He who looks at the divine names will see that there is a divine conflict."[12] The divine conflict intensifies in the external entities since they are veiled from each other; thus another name is needed to arbitrate between the entities. Qayṣārī says, "Because each one of them seeks its manifestation, dominion and governance, there is conflict and discord among the external entities, since they are veiled from each other by the name the Manifest."[13] The conflict can only be resolved by the manifestation of the name the Just, which guides each name to its perfection and protects the entities from infringing upon each other, as Qayṣarī says:

> So, the divine affair requires the manifestation of a just arbitrator to mediate between them and preserve their order in this world and the hereafter.
>
> It is the true prophet, the pre-eternal (*al-azal*) and everlasting (*al-abad*) Pole (*qutb*), the first, the last, the manifest and the hidden.[14]

The just arbitrator is the true prophet and the eternal Pole of existence that guides and brings all things to their ontological perfection; it is the Muḥammadan Reality who is the lord of the hidden and manifest realms. Just as each prophet functions as the just arbitrator who guides a nation, the Muḥammadan Reality is the hidden prophet who guides each individual prophet in his own spiritual development. For this reason, Prophet Muḥammad stated, "I was a prophet while Adam was between water and clay,"[15] that is, between knowledge and corporeality,[16] spirit and body, or intellectual form in the Permanent Archetypes and elemental form.[17] Āmulī says:

> This is because his reality is the reality of the Supreme Spirit and his form is the form that manifests this reality in all of its names and attributes. The remaining prophets manifest some of its names and attributes. The Supreme Spirit manifests some of the attributes and names in each locus, but it reveals its essence and all of its attributes in the Muḥammadan manifestation who seals prophethood. Thus, the Prophet precedes all the prophets with respect to reality and follows them with respect to form, as he said, "We are the last, the first."[18]

Sainthood (*wilāya*)

One of the foundational concepts in Sufism is *wilāya*.[19] which is often translated as sainthood, but also means guardianship and spiritual authority. Lexically, *wilāya* is derived from the Arabic root letters *w-l-y*, which means to be near, to follow, to border and to befriend.[20] It relates to the concept of succession, such as its derivative, *tālī* (subsequent) being used in contrast with *muqaddam* (prior), which links two successive events. The word *walī*, occurs in the form of *faʿīl* but denotes the active participle (*fāʿil*). It means one who possesses authority over something else, or one who displays love and support and care by virtue of the love that exists for the other.[21]

The basic lexical meaning of the root and its derivatives indicate that there is a successive chain of authority or guardianship in the way that a father exerts guardianship over a child, or a believer exerts guardianship over another believer, "The believers are guardians of each other" (9:71), or in the way that God possesses authority over the believers, "God is the guardian (*walī*) of the believers; He takes them from the darkness into light" (2:257). God exerts *wilāya* over the believers by guiding them, demonstrating His proofs through the prophets and revealed scriptures, supporting them against their enemies and establishing His religion, and rewarding them for their righteous actions.

The word *wilāya* with a *kasra* on the *waw*, means spiritual authority, and *walāya* with a *fatḥa* on the *waw* means love or friendship. Thus, the former is connected to guardianship, in the sense of protection, management of affairs, authority and superiority. Furthermore, *wilāya* is of the verb form *fiʿāla* which signifies a duty such as *khilāfa* (to govern), whereas *faʿāla*, such as *walāya*, signifies a state of being.[22] Qūnawī says, "*Walī* means helper, the One who helps His friends (*awliyāʾ*) and subdues His enemies. So, the *walī* is helped by His assistance and the enemy is subdued by his own wretchedness."[23] In Qurʾānic terms:

> God is the *walī* of those who believe; He takes them out of the darkness (*ẓulumāt*) and into the light (*nūr*). As for those who disbelieve, their *awliyāʾ* are false leaders (*ṭāghūt*) who take them out of the light and into the darkness (2:257).[24]

Qūnawī writes:

> Know that the governance of this name in assisting the believers is two-fold: To assist them generally by transferring them from the darkness of non-being to the light of Being. Secondly, to specifically move them from their own knowledge to the vastness of God's knowledge. It is the movement of the gnostic from the darkness of veils to the light of witnessing, so that he sees what was hidden from him.
>
> In the first aspect, the servant's existence is a branch from the original existence of God, and in the second, the God's knowledge is a branch of the original knowledge of the servant. This is because the servant's knowledge of God is a branch of God's knowledge of Himself, as the Prophet says, "He who knows himself, knows his Lord."[25]

Wilāya is the chain of authority that extends from God's authority, as stated in the Qurʾān, "Originator of the heavens and earth, You are my *walī* (guardian) in the world and the hereafter" (12:101), and "Indeed, your *walī* (authority) is God, the Messenger and those who 'possess authority'" (4:59), then the prophets, then the saint who inherits and embodies the prophetic reality inwardly. Qayṣarī writes:

> Thus, prophethood is a complete circle, possessing a finite number of circles differing in scope. You have come to know that the manifest only receives assistance, strength, power, activity, knowledge and divine emanations except through the hidden, which is the station of sainthood (*wilāya*), derived from "*walī*," which means nearness; *walī* means beloved as well.[26]

Some believe that the Prophet invested spiritual authority in the person of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib during his lifetime, according to his words, "Whosoever

considered me his master (*mawlā*), ʿAlī is his master."[27] The chain of sainthood continued through the lineage of ʿAlī, as it had continued through the lineage of Abraham. Historically, this has been the central position of Shīʿism, that spiritual authority passed from the Prophet to Imam ʿAlī, then to the Imams from his progeny. This doctrinal view also has traction in Sufism since all Sufi spiritual lineages return to Imam ʿAlī, "This is why the initiatory cloak (*khirqa*) of every Sufi Shaykh (*mashāyikh*) is only ascribed to him, and their paths (*ṭarīqa*) only trace back to his representatives."[28] The *shaykh* in Sufism is analogous to the Imam in Shīʿism, only differing in the degree of spiritual authority (*wilāya*), as the latter is considered the absolute saint and the former the relative saint. The Sufi *shaykh* is none other than an inheriting saint, whose spiritual authority proceeds from the divine authority vested in the Prophets and the absolute saints. Thus, the wayfaring disciple is in need of the *shaykh*, for he moves by virtue of his initiation into the *shaykh's* spiritual compass. Āmulī says:

> The inner aspect of this prophethood is absolute *wilāya*. Absolute *wilāya* is acquiring all of these perfections according to the inward pre-eternal aspect and subsisting eternally, as Imam ʿAlī stated "I was a saint while Adam was still between water and clay," just as the Prophet had said, "ʿAlī and I are from one light," and his saying, "God created my spirit and the spirit of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib two thousand years before He created the creation," and "God sent ʿAlī secretly with every prophet and openly with me."[29]

The Spiritual Pivot

In the terminology of the Sufis, the divine name *al-Walī* is "a universal reality of the divine Essence, the source of manifestation and the origin of individuation of the divine names and attributes."[30] Because *wilāya* describes the Essence, it is also the essence of prophethood and its pivot. Qayṣarī explains:

> This is because their sainthood is the aspect of their reality being annihilated in Him, their prophethood is their angelic aspect through which they possess an affinity with the angelic world from which they receive revelation, and their messengership is their human aspect corresponding to the human world.[31]

Ibn al-ʿArabī considers that "the station of prophethood is an isthmus below sainthood and above messengership,"[32] since sainthood encompasses both of them and is above messengership.

Therefore, sainthood is the inward aspect of prophethood. Through sainthood the prophet receives grace from God and through prophethood it reaches creation. Jami writes:

> What has been related by some of the saints, that sainthood is higher than prophethood, is that the saintly aspect of the prophet is higher than the prophetic aspect of the prophet, not that the saintly aspect of the saint, who is subordinate, is higher than the prophetic aspect of the prophet.[33]

Nevertheless, every prophet is also a saint, as Āmūlī writes:

> One is not a prophet unless his prophethood is preceded by his sainthood. Similarly, one is not a messenger unless his messengership is preceded by his prophethood. Since w*ilāya* is the inward aspect of prophethood and prophethood is the inward aspect of messengership. Each of the two is nobler and superior than the other because, without doubt, the inward aspects of things are superior than their outward aspects, for the latter are in need of the former.[34]

According to Kāshānī *wilāya* is the actualization of the midpoint in relation to the universal divine names and realities.[35] He says:

> For every name, reality and Universal Name, there is a central point that comprehends all that is subsumed under the governance of that comprehensive Universal Name, whereby if it exceeds that point, then it no longer has that comprehensive spiritual form, or the same name, but takes on another name which is subordinate and governed by it, manifesting in the form of the latter. The central point is that of *wilāya*, for its being proximate to the absolute Singularity itself. Thus, that actualized individual at the central point is truly a saint (*walī*) and proximate. If that person, having actualized the point of *wilāya*, returns to the descending degrees of existence to elevate those degrees or inform others of the reality of the unity of that name and its central point, then he is a Prophet.[36]

Therefore, according to Qayṣarī:

> The circle of this station is more complete and greater than the circle of prophethood, prophethood is sealed and sainthood is enduring since *al-walī* is one of the names of God, unlike *nabī*. Since sainthood possesses greater scope than prophethood and is its inner aspect, it encompasses both prophets and saints.[37]

Therefore, *wilāya* has no end whereas prophethood has been sealed. Ibn al-ʿArabī writes:

> Know that *wilāya* is a universal, all-encompassing sphere, and for this reason, it does not end. It is the domain of general prophethood. As for

> prophethood (*nubuwwa*) and messengership (*risāla*), they do reach an end which is in the person of Muḥammad, peace and blessings upon him, since after him there is neither any other prophet—meaning a prophet who brings a revealed Law or adopts a previously revealed Law—nor any other messenger.[38]

Thus, every messenger is a prophet but not every prophet is a messenger, just as every prophet is a saint but not every saint is a prophet. The prophets, then, are the highest saints for the combining of two stations: sainthood and prophethood, even if their sainthood is higher than their prophethood and their prophethood is higher than their messengership.

The Types of Sainthood

Qayṣarī posits two types of sainthood, the general and the specific. General sainthood is attained by the believers, commensurate with their level of faith. Those whose faith is confirmed by true unveilings have the highest faith, whereas those whose faith is founded on rational proofs have an intermediate level, and those whose faith is based on imitation of the veracious are at the lowest level. In all cases, "God is the *walī* of the believers; He takes them out of the darkness into light" (2:257).

The second type of sainthood is specific to the wayfarers who have arrived at the station of subsistence after their annihilation in God, as Qayṣarī says:

> It includes only those wayfarers who have arrived, having become annihilated in Him and subsist through Him. Specific sainthood is the annihilation of the servant in God and the *walī* is one who is annihilated in Him and subsists through Him.[39]

Annihilation does not refer to absolute non-being, but when it occurs before subsistence, it means divesting oneself of the attributes of contingency. Subsistence after annihilation is to assume the divine attributes, as in the hadith, "Assume the character traits of God."[40] Qayṣarī says:

> Annihilation here does not mean the total non-existence of the servant, rather it is the annihilation of the human aspect in the divine aspect, since every servant possesses an aspect from the divine Presence, referred to by the verse, "Everything has a direction to which it turns."[41]

This annihilation is not intellectual but existential and there is an actual transformation in the visible aspect of the wayfarer due to the overpowering effect of his spirit. The Sufis often illustrate this point with the analogy of a piece of coal in a fire. In its initial state, the coal is cold, dense and opaque; it differs from fire in all respects. However, coming in contact with the fire, its inherent receptivity for acquiring its properties substantially transforms it. If

not for the inherent similarity between the essence of the coal and the essence of the fire, transformation would not be possible. Similarly, the wayfarer possesses an aspect of separation and an aspect of unity with God. When he orients himself completely to God, gaining proximity to His presence, he acquires divine properties and sheds those of contingency. Thereafter, the aspects of separation and individuation no longer remain, as Qūnawī says:

> It is inconceivable that one thing should love another thing in the respect that the thing differs from it. It can only love that thing as a result of the property of some meaning shared between the two of them, in respect of which an affinity is established between them. As a result of knowledge and awareness of this affinity, the person who has this knowledge and awareness will seek to remove totally the properties of separation and to manifest the dominating force of that which brings about unification. Then, complete union will definitely follow.[42]

The saint's annihilation is on account of his complete orientation toward God, which springs from essential divine love, one that the Beloved initiates and one that the lovers pursue. Thus, there are two types of sainthood according to the types of wayfaring. If the Beloved initiates, the wayfarer attains God without effort, struggle or the guidance of a master. It is sheer divine providence and essential primordial guidance alluded to by the Qurʾān in the verse, "Those to whom there has gone beforehand the best reward from Us" (21:101).

If the lovers pursue, they attain God on account of their efforts, disciplines, abstentions and the master's guidance, as the verse says, "As for those who strive in Us, We shall surely guide them in Our ways." (29:69). The first type are prophets, saints and their followers who are distinguished by their innate truthfulness and complete sincerity. Their attainment to God is pure divine bestowal before the creation of the world, intimated by the verse, "Their Lord will give them to drink, a pure drink" (76:21). According to some authors, Imām ʿAlī is describing those saints in his statement:

> Truly, God Almighty has a wine for His friends (*awliyāʾ*), that when they drink it, they become intoxicated; when they become intoxicated, they are enraptured; when they are enraptured, they are blessed; and when they are blessed, they melt away; and when they melt away, they become pure; and when they become pure, they become sincere; when they become sincere, they seek; when they seek, they find; when they find, they attain; when they attain, they unite, so when they unite, there remains no difference between them and their Beloved.[43]

These are the prophets and specific saints (*awliyāʾ*), who possess an innate nearness to God based on their essential receptivity. They are the individuations of absolute *wilāya* and the manifestations of the divine name *al-Walī*.

The divinely appointed saints are the inheritors of the Prophet's consummate sainthood. This sainthood is the inner aspect and reality of prophethood which extends through them until it reaches its seal. Just as prophethood has a seal, sainthood has a seal, as Ibn al-ʿArabī says:

> This is because the world has a beginning and end, which is its sealing … and God has sealed this promulgation of religion with the religion of Muḥammad. He was the Seal of the Prophets of God, and "God is Omniscient of all things" (33:40), because universal sainthood begins with Adam and God seals it with Jesus, and the beginning resembles the end, "The example of Jesus with God is like that of Adam" (3:59). He sealed it like He began it, so the beginning of this affair was an absolute prophet, as was its seal.[44]

Identifying the absolute and relative Seal of the saints (*khatm al-awliyāʾ*) has been a matter of debate among the commentators, especially Āmulī who challenged Ibn al-ʿArabī on both accounts. While the arguments are outside the scope of this work, it suffices to cite Āmulī's framing of the issue:

> Some of the masters, such as the perfect Shaykh Muḥyī al-Dīn b. al-ʿArabī—may God sanctify his secret—and one of his followers, Sharaf al-Dīn al-Qayṣarī maintain that the absolute Seal of the saints is Jesus, the son of Mary, and the relative Seal of the saints is Muḥyī-l-Dīn b. al-ʿArabī. It is said that Ibn ʿArabī himself expressed this idea in some of his writings. Those who have maintained that the absolute Seal of the saints is ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, is the perfect Shaykh Saʿd al-dīn Hamūyah and one of his followers, Kamāl al-Dīn ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī—may God sanctify their spirits—and the relative Seal of saints is al-Mahdī; That is what the two aforementioned Shaykhs agree upon, and this impoverished one (*faqīr*) is among them.[45]

The Four Journeys

Later followers of Ibn al-ʿArabī, notably Mullā Ṣadrā, have advanced the idea of four principal journeys in wayfaring. These are all-inclusive of the one hundred stations Anṣarī mentions in *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn*. Sainthood is the seventh section (*qism al-wilāyāt*) in the *Manāzil*, subsuming ten other stations but is not, according to this classification, a station in itself. According to Qayṣarī, sainthood begins at the end of the first journey through the divine name *al-Walī*:

> The initial [stage] of sainthood occurs at the end of the first journey, the journey from creation to God, having severed the love of manifestations and otherness, extricated oneself from limits and veils, traversed stations and stages, and arrived at the highest degree and level.[46]

Among the premodern Persian mystics, Muḥammad Riḍā Qumshaʾī (d. 1306/1888),[47] has abridged Sadrā's views on the four journeys in the following selection:[48]

> Know that a "journey" is a movement from one's abode in a particular direction through various stages. The outward journey needs no elaboration.[49] As for the spiritual journeys, there are four, according to the gnostics: The first journey is from creation to God, by removing the veils of darkness and light that exist between man and his pre-eternal spiritual reality. There are two principal veils: veils of darkness of the soul and veils of light of the intellect and spirit. One traverses each of these stages by removing their [corresponding] veils.
>
> Thus, if the wayfarer removes veils, he witnesses the God's Beauty and is annihilated in His Essence. This is the station of "annihilation," which involves the mystery (*sirr*), the hidden (*khafī*) and the arcane (*akhfa*).[50] This is the end of the first journey whereby his existence becomes real. He experiences "drunkenness" (*maḥw*) and ecstatic utterances (*shaṭḥ*) and is blamed for infidelity. But if he finds divine assistance, drunkenness ceases and after the manifestation of Lordship, he acknowledges servitude.
>
> At the end of the first journey, the wayfarer begins the journey from God to God by God (*min al-ḥaqq ila-l-ḥaqq bi-l-ḥaqq*). This takes place by God because the wayfarer has become a saint and his existence has become real. He begins this journey from the Essence and proceeds to its perfections until he knows all the names, except those that are treasured with Him (*istaʾthara ʿindahū*).[51] So, his *wilāya* becomes complete and his essence, attributes and acts become annihilated in the divine Essence, Attributes and Acts.[52] He then becomes annihilated from "annihilatedness" which is the station of the arcane. Thus, the circle of *wilāya* is complete, the second journey ends, and he begins the third journey.
>
> The third journey is from God to the creation. He journeys through this stage through his acts and obtains complete sobriety (*saḥw*). He subsists through the God's subsistence, travels through the worlds of Invincibility (*jabarūt*), Dominion (*malakūt*) and Divinity (*lahūt*), and obtains a share in prophethood, although this is not legislative prophethood. At this point, the third journey ends, and he begins the fourth journey.
>
> The fourth journey is from creation to creation by God. He witnesses the creatures, their effects and their requisites. He knows their benefits and their evils and the manner of their return to God and what takes them there. He informs them of what brings them felicity and what prevents it. So, he becomes a prophet alongside the legislative prophet.[53]

The degrees of perfection and classes of individuals are categorized in accordance with their proximity to the reality of prophethood and *wilāya*,

which are the manifestations of divinity. For this reason, Prophet Muḥammad said, "He who has seen me has seen God"[54] and Jesus said, "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father."[55]

The mystic philosopher of the Qajar era and a master of Ṣadra's teachings, Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī (d. 1290/1873)[56] recounts these degrees in ascending order:

> If one believes in what the prophets brought from God, he is a Muslim. If he incorporates this with adhering to the *wilāya* of the Imāms, he is a person of faith (*muʾmin*). In addition to this, if he spends most of his time being occupied with worship, he is a worshipper (*ʿābid*). But if he includes abstention from the world and his desires, he is an ascetic (*zāhid*). If he has gnosis of things as they truly are, he is a gnostic (*ʿārif*). If God brings him from this station to the station of proximity and assists him with inspiration and breathes into his heart (*rūʿ*),[57] he is a saint (*walī*). If He appoints him with a book, he is a messenger (*rasūl*). If, in addition to this, He appoints him to abrogate a previous Law (*sharīʿa*), he is one of the "resolute ones" (*ūlu-l-ʿazm*). If He chooses him to seal prophethood, he is the "seal" (*al-khātim*). These are the "ten complete."[58]

Since these are ascending degrees of perfection, the seal of prophethood is Muḥammad, who combines all three stations: messengership, prophethood and *wilāya*. Messengership is the degree that pertains to the Kingdom and the human plane. Prophethood is the degree that possesses affinity to the Dominion, the angelic realm, since it is by means of an angel that the prophet receives revelation (*waḥy*), and *wilāya* is its inward reality and pertains to the Invincibility, which is closest to divinity.

Since the meanings of *wilāya* include authority, management, superiority and guardianship, *wilāya* commands influence in creation or a theurgical power by directing worldly or spiritual affairs; this is called "existential *wilāya*" (*al-wilāya al-takwīniyya*). Theurgy may also be acquired by powerful souls and those who delve into the occult or paranormal. The display of power by a saint is called *karāma* which is a saintly marvel or wonder and often considered a divine sign.

Saints who are annihilated in God, having adorned themselves with the divine attributes, remain in the state of complete submission to His will. Their gnosis is through the manifestation of the name the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*), and their theurgy is through the name the Able (*al-Qādir*), as the Qurʾān alludes, "You did not throw when you threw, but it is God who threw" (8:17). As it is possible for the saints to attain such powers in this life, the Prophet states that the people of paradise will also have the power to create at will:

> From the Living and Subsisting who does not die, to the living and eternal who does not die, I say to a thing "Be!" and it is. I have made you [able] to say to a thing "Be!" and it is. So, the Prophet says, "No one in paradise will say to a thing 'Be!' unless it is."

Notes

1 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 213.
2 ʿIzz al-Dīn al-Kāshānī was a member of the Suhrawardiyya Sufi order who was influenced by the writings of Ibn al-ʿArabī. He wrote *Miṣbāḥ al-hidāya wa miftāḥ al-kifāya* (Lamp of Guidance and Key to Sufficiency), a work inspired by Shihāb al-Dīn Suhrawardī's Sufi classic, *ʿAwārif al-maʾārif*.
3 ʿIzz al-Dīn Kāshānī, *Kashf al-wujūh al-ghurr li-maʿānī naẓm al-durr* (Beirut, 2005), cited in Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 859.
4 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 227.
5 The Qurʾān calls the Arabs "unlettered" even though they knew how to read and write, as Imām al-Ṣādiq explains, "They used to read and write but they did not possess a divine book nor was there a prophet sent to them, so God called them unlettered." Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzan fi tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 19:280.
6 Ismāʿīl Hakkī Bursawī, *Tafsīr rūḥ al-bayān* (Beirut, 2003), 9:601.
7 Ṭabāṭabāʾī, *al-Mīzan fi tafsīr al-Qurʾān*, 19:280.
8 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 227.
9 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 1:12, no. 11.
10 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 227.
11 This statement is attributed to ʿAlī b. Muḥammad al-Hādī (d. 254/868), the 10th Shīʿī Imam. Kulaynī, *al-Kāfi*, 1:24, no. 20.
12 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futuḥāt*, 2:92 (II 93.19).
13 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 225.
14 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 225.
15 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 16:2; Āmulī, *Asrār al-sharīʿa*, 380.
16 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 225.
17 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān Jāmī, *Sharḥ fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam* (Beirut, 2004), 508.
18 Āmulī, *Asrār al-sharīʿa*, 277.
19 *Wilāya* is a central tenet of Shīʿī doctrine. It is mentioned along with the other pillars of religion in one of the authoritative hadith collections, *Wasāʾil al-shiʿa*. The fifth Imam, Muḥammad al-Bāqir said, "Islam is founded on five [pillars]: prayer, charity, Hajj, fasting and *wilāya*." Then, Zurāra asked, which of these is superior? The Imām replied, "*Wilāya*, because it is the key and the *Wālī* is the guide towards the rest." ʿĀmilī, Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan al-Ḥurr. *Tafṣīl wasāʾil al-Shīʿa ilā taḥṣīl masāʾil al-sharīʿa* (Qum, 1988), 1:13.
20 See M.A. Amir-Moezzi, *The Spirituality of Shiʾi Islam* (London, 2011), 233; See also Michel Chodkiewicz, *Seal of the Saints: Prophethood and Sainthood in the Doctrine of Ibn al-ʿArabī* (Cambridge, 1993); Herman Landolt, "Walāyah," *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, ed. M. Eliade (New York, 1987), 15:316–323; B. Radtke and J. O'Kane, *The Concept of Sainthood in Early Islamic Mysticism* (London, 1996).
21 Ṣadrā, *Tafsīr Qurʾān al-karīm*, 5:212.
22 Muḥammad H. Tabatabāʾī, *Risalat al-Walayah*, trans. M. Dasht Bozorgi and F. Asadi Amjad, *The Return to Being* (London, 2009).
23 Ṣadr al-Dīn Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnaʾ* (Beirut, 2008), 297.
24 The Qurʾān uses the plural form of the word "darkness" (*ẓulumāt*) here and the singular for the word "light" (*nūr*). Since "God is the light of the heavens and the earth," His light is the light of unity, while darkness denotes the realms of multiplicity and is therefore expressed in the plural.
25 Qūnawī, *Sharḥ al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnaʾ*, 297.
26 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 227.
27 Ibn Mājah, *Sunan*, 1:42; Sulayman b. Aḥmad Tabarānī, *al-Muʿjam al-kabīr* (Beirut, 2009), 5:186.
28 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 401.

29 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 382.
30 Āshtiyānī, *Sharḥ-i muqaddima-yi Qayṣarī bar fuṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 866. "God is the Guardian (*walī*), the Praiseworthy (*ḥamīd*)" (42:28).
31 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 231.
32 Cited in Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 213.
33 Jāmī, *Naqd al-nuṣūṣ*, 214.
34 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 385.
35 Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 596.
36 Kāshānī, *Laṭāʾif al-aʿlām*, 545.
37 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 231.
38 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Fūṣūṣ al-ḥikam*, 134.
39 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 229.
40 Ghazālī, *al-Maqṣad al-asnā*, 42.
41 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 229.
42 Ṣadr al-Dīn al-Qūnawī, *al-Nafaḥāt al-ilāhiyya* (Tehran, 2005–7), 64–65. See *Fakhruddin ʿIraqi: Divine Flashes*, trans. W. Chittick and P. Wilson, 18.
43 Sayyid Ḥaydar Āmulī, *Tafsīr muḥīṭ al-aʿẓam*, ed. M. Tabrīzī (Qum, 2001), 1:266; Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-asmāʾ al-husnā*, ed. N. Ḥabībī (Tehran, 1996), 534.
44 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Futūḥāt*, 2:51 (II 50). The question identifying the seal of the saints is outside the scope of this book.
45 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 395.
46 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 231.
47 Qumshaʾī intermingled Shīʿī ideas with Ibn al-ʿArabī's mysticism, following in the footsteps of Āmulī, Ṣadrā and Fayḍ Kāshānī. See Hamed Naji Esfahani, "Āqā Muḥammad Riḍā Qumshaʾī" in *Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, ed. R. Pourjavady (Leiden, 2019). Nasr writes, "Although a definite master of the school of Mullā Ṣadrā, Āqā Muḥammad Riḍā was above all a master of gnosis in the school of Ibn ʿArabī and in fact the greatest representative of this school in Persia during the past few centuries … He was called the 'second Ibn ʿArabī.'" Nasr, *Islamic Philosophy from Its Origin to the Present*, 243.
48 Ṣadrā, *Asfār*, 1:13–16, cited in Nasr, *Ṣadr al-Dīn Shīrāzī and His Transcendent Theosophy*, 58.
49 The journey of form is the physical journey that begins with birth and ends with death.
50 These are degrees of the spirit, as mentioned in chapter nine.
51 See chapter two for the hadith referring to the Treasured Names.
52 Referring to the hadith of *nawāfil*, "He hears through His hearing, sees through His sight, walks by His aid and strikes through His striking."
53 He functions as a legislative prophet insofar as he guides them to their felicity.
54 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 58:235.
55 Bible, John 14:9.
56 See Fatemeh Fana, "Mullā Hādī Sabzawārī" in *Philosophy in Qajar Iran*, ed. R. Pourjavady (Leiden, 2019).
57 Heart or mind, in "Verily the Trusted Spirit (Gabriel) inspired into my heart." Suyūṭī, *Jāmiʿ al-ṣaghīr*, 1:347; Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 5:80.
58 Sabzawārī, *Sharḥ al-asmāʾ al-ḥusnā*, 546. This refers to the Qurʾān's expression, "Those are the ten complete" (2:196).

12 Resurrection

Having discussed the origin of divine manifestation and its perfection in the human reality, we explore Being from the perspective of its return. The Return is the Resurrection or Greater Resurrection, the Day of Judgement, the Rising, the Gathering, the Day of Separating and the Hour. It is the return of all things to their origin and the assembling of souls for accountability before God, after which every individual will know its final abode, whether it is paradise or hell. The Resurrection is characterized by the removal of corporeal matter, a dense veil that is opaque and ontologically lower than every other spiritual form. Mullā Ṣadrā writes:

> Know that the Rising, as we have indicated, is behind the veils of the heavens and earth. Its relation to this world is like that of a human to the womb and a bird to the egg. As long as the outer structure is not broken, the states of the inner reality cannot be revealed because the Unseen and the manifest one cannot be combined in a single place. So, the "hour" will not occur unless "the earth is shaken violently" (99:1), "the heaven is split apart" (82:1), "the planets are scattered" (82:2), "the stars fall, the sun is blotted out" (81:1–2), and "the moon is eclipsed" (75:8).[1]

Since the entities have both form and meaning, an outward and hidden aspect, Qayṣarī says:

> There is no doubt that the hereafter occurs only after the lifting of veils and the manifestation of God in true singularity, just as everything will appear in its true form, and truth will be distinguished from falsehood, since it is the Day of Judgment and decree.[2]

So, the names the Hidden and the Manifest will reverse their roles. All that is hidden in the external world, such as the souls and its states, thoughts, meanings and intentions will become manifest in the hereafter. The forms of paradise, hellfire and the Resurrection will appear after the cessation of this world because the dominion of the Hidden will encompass the dominion of the Manifest.

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The proofs of the Resurrection, paradise and hell are numerous in the Qurʾān and hadith. Just as these realities have external manifestations, there are corresponding inward states on the plane of the spirit, intellect, heart and soul. For example, paradise is the heart being enraptured by divine blessings and praiseworthy qualities, while hell is the pain of separation from divine grace. Just as there is a macrocosmic Resurrection, there is a Resurrection in the spirit.

The Macrocosmic Resurrection

The macrocosmic Resurrection is the annihilation of the world, the rolling up of the heavens and the appearance of the hereafter. It is the removal of contingency and the arrival of the manifestations that are particular to the Essence. The Resurrection is governed by the properties of the names the Hidden (*al-bāṭin*), the Last (*al-ākhir*), the Just (*al-ʿadl*), the Compeller (*al-qahhār*), the One (*al-wāḥid*), the Single (*al-aḥad*), the Solitary (*al-fard*), the Eternal (*al-ṣamad*), the Independent (*al-ghanī*), the Mighty (*al-ʿazīz*), the Restorer (*al-muʿīd*), the Life-giver (*al-muḥyī*), the Life-taker (*al-mumīt*), the Effacer (*al-māḥī*), and other names that characterize eternality, subsistence, reward, punishment and sovereignty. Āmulī says:

> The Greater Resurrection is the cessation of the manifestations of contingency and the arrival of the manifestations that are particular to the Essence. Just as the multiplicity of the phenomenal world is annihilated in the wake of Essential unity in the macrocosm, there is a Greater Resurrection in the microcosm.[3]

Although the Qurʾān uses the term "hereafter" (*al-ākhira*) to denote its posteriority, the Sufis hold that this Resurrection is not temporally posterior to the present world, as the Prophet said, "Whoever dies, his Resurrection has already begun."[4] When the spirit has separated from its elemental body, the inward realities of paradise and hell are immediately perceptible to it, as the veil has become removed. Likewise, the hadith states, "By Him who holds the soul of Muḥammad in his hand, indeed paradise and hell is closer to each one of you than your shoelaces."[5]

Similarly, the pleasures and pains the soul experiences in the *barzakh* of the grave is due to the ontological unity of those realities in the spirit. The realities of the "hereafter" are actually realities of the soul that are hidden in the physical world and become manifest in the *barzakh*. This is clear from the Prophet's statement, "The grave is a garden from the gardens of paradise for the believer, and a pit from the firepits of hell for the unbeliever."[6] It means that those who have entered the *barzakh* perceive the realities of either paradise or hell with the eye of certainty. In relation to this type of perception, Mullā Ṣadrā writes:

> In reality, all that man conceives or perceives—whether through intellection or sensation, and whether in this world or in the other world—are

> not things separate from his essence and from his ipseity … Therefore, in the state of (bodily) death, there is nothing to prevent the soul from perceiving all that it perceives and senses, without any association with external material or with any bodily organ separate from the world of the souls and its own reality … None of the things that a man sees and directly witnesses in the other world—whether they be the blessings of paradise, such as the *houris*, palaces, gardens, trees and streams, or the opposite sorts of punishment that are in Hell—are outside the essence of the soul and separate from the soul's being.[7]

Therefore, paradise and hell are immediately perceptible to one whose spiritual insight is not obscured by veils or has already passed beyond the material realm into the *barzakh*. The macrocosmic Resurrection, however, occurs after the annihilation of all contingent existence, and it includes the angels, according to the verse, "Everything shall perish, except His face" (28:88), and the hadith, "God will cause all of creation to die, even the angels, including the angel of death, then He will restore them for separation and judgment, in order to assign them their place either in paradise or in hell."[8] Everything will be subsumed under the Presence of Singularity, which is the effacement of all multiplicity, even the multiplicity of the names and attributes. Since the Resurrection is the return of all things to their origin, even the names will return to their origins, which is the Singularity of the Essence, as Qayṣarī says, "Just as the individuations of creation exist because of divine theophanies at the degrees of multiplicity, they cease due to the theophanies of the Essence at the degrees of Unity."[9]

Qayṣarī points out that those with rational knowledge who have not witnessed through spiritual unveiling, doubt the realities of the Resurrection, paradise and hell, their concomitant events, their mode of existence and the states of the soul in the hereafter. This is because these realities and other spiritual matters are beyond the comprehension of ordinary intellects and certitude is only possible through unveiling. If one does not have certainty from unveiling, he must at least have faith in the statements and descriptions of the prophets.

The Intermediate Resurrection

The Intermediate Resurrection is the spiritual transference known as voluntary death (*al-mawt al-irādī*) through which a person is reborn.[10] Qayṣarī says:

> In comparison, there is voluntary death, which the wayfarers whose orientation is God attain before the occurrence of natural death. The Prophet, peace be upon him, said, "Whoever wishes to see a dead man walking on the surface of the earth, let him look at Abū Bakr," and said, "Die before you die."[11]

Āmulī writes:

> The reality of this death is mentioned by the Prophet when he says, "Die before you die," and when Imam ʿAlī said, "The [Wayfarer] brought his intellect to life, extinguished [the desires] of his self, until his bulk became light and coarseness became subtle. An effulgence of light shone from him, illuminating his path so he traversed it. It pushed open many doors until [he reached] the door of peace and the abode of permanence; his feet grounded by the tranquility of his body in the station of safety and repose on account of how he used his heart and pleased his Lord."[12]

The Intermediate Resurrection is the annihilation of the self in the same way that multiplicity is effaced in the Greater Resurrection, as Qayṣarī states:

> God's engendering of things and becoming hidden in them—while manifesting Himself in them and His annihilation of them at the Greater Resurrection—is His manifestation in His oneness. His annihilation of all things during the Greater Resurrection is, in fact, the return of the manifestation of His oneness, through the effacement of all multiplicity. This is because the Greater Resurrection is the return to the station of union after the annihilation of multiplicity of contingent existence. In the Lesser Resurrection, which occurs immediately after physical death, it is the transformation of entities from their corporeal form to their spiritual forms hidden within them. There is another type of resurrection called the Intermediate Resurrection that occurs by the will of the wayfarer once he has died the death of the lower self.[13]

The Microcosmic Resurrection

Just as the multiplicity of the phenomenal world is effaced in the wake of Essential unity, the microcosmic Resurrection is the final stage of spiritual evolution in the Arc of Descent. Whereas all other entities have a defined ontological position, the microcosmic Resurrection is annihilation in God and subsistence in Him, with respect to the human essence, attributes and acts, each corresponding to the divine Essence, Attributes and Acts. Āmulī writes:

> In the microcosm, there are three resurrections pertaining to form. The first occurs through natural death, which removes the veil of the corporeal body, the second is remaining in the intermediary world (*barzakh*) and experiencing the pleasures or torments pertaining to that world, and the third is the Day of Judgement itself. There are also three resurrections in the microcosm pertaining to meaning, and the degree of annihilation is not simply intellectual but existential as well.[14]

Just as the identity of individual drops are annihilated in the ocean, the identity of the servant and the aspect of createdness is annihilated in the aspect of Lordship. Human attributes are replaced by divine attributes, whereby God becomes manifest and the servant becomes hidden so that his activity in the world becomes divine activity. Qayṣarī says:

> It may be because the disappearance [of entities] in the aspect of [Lordship] is like the disappearance of stars in sunlight, so that the aspect of servitude is concealed in the aspect of Lordship, whereby the Lord becomes manifest and the servant becomes hidden.[15]

Āmulī says the Greater Resurrection of the spirit is

> the unveiling of the God's Essence and Being from behind the veils of Beauty and Majesty. It is removing the veils of otherness, whereby one sees nothing but Him, namely, the theophany of a single Essence in the infinite names. As it is said, "There is nothing in existence except God,"[16] His Names, Attributes and Acts. Everything is Him, by Him, from Him and to Him.[17]

At this point, the wayfarer reaches the Unity of the Essence and rises for the Greater Resurrection of the spirit. This is because the Resurrection in the macrocosm is an expression of the verse, "To whom does sovereignty belong today? To *Allah*, the One, the Subduer!" (40:16).

Similarly, sovereignty belongs to God in the spiritual Resurrection and the governance of the One pervades the microcosm while all otherness becomes annihilated by the Subduer. True annihilation in God is like drops of water unifying with the ocean or candlelight disappearing in sunlight.

This annihilation is also due to the love attained from supererogatory action, referred to by the hadith *qudsī*:

> The servant does not cease approaching me through supererogatory works until I love him, and when I love him, I become his hearing through which he hears, his sight by which he sees, his tongue by which he speaks, his hand by which he seizes and his foot by which he walks.[18]

Qayṣarī writes:

> It may be due to the transformation of human attributes into divine attributes—other than the Essence. Thus, whenever one of its attributes disappears, a divine attribute takes its place, at which point God becomes his hearing and his vision as the hadith expresses, and he conducts himself in existence according to God's will.[19]

Multiplicity is thus dissolved in unity, which is his real transformation. Then, the servant subsists through God because, "Servanthood is a reality whose essence is Lordship. Whatever is missing in servanthood is found in Lordship, and whatever is hidden in Lordship is attained in servanthood."[20] Āmulī says:

> The reality of certainty is the threshold of true subsistence after complete annihilation, also termed separation after union, which is the station of completion and the return to multiplicity through God, by God, as stated, "You did not strike when you struck, but God struck" (8:17), and in the hadith *qudsī*, "I am his hearing, sight, tongue, hand and foot. Through me he listens, sees, speaks, strikes and walks." This is the ultimate station of the Perfect Human, above which there is no degree or station. It is the station of "two bows' length or nearer" (53:93) and the Praiseworthy Station (*al-maqām al-maḥmūd*).[21]

Notes

1 Ṣadrā, *Kitāb al-ʿarshiyya*, 75, trans. J. Morris, *Wisdom of the Throne*, 199–200.
2 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 215.
3 See Āmūlī's discussion on the Greater Resurrection according to the three levels of *sharīʿa, ṭarīqa* and *ḥaqīqa* in his *Asrār al-sharīʿa*, 316.
4 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 199. Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār* 61:7.
5 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6488.
6 Tirmidhī, *Jāmiʿ*, no. 2460; Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 43:346 and 33:545.
7 Ṣadra, *Kitāb al-ʿarshiyya*, 50, trans. J. Morris, *The Wisdom of the Throne*, 151.
8 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 6:326.
9 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 217.
10 The Bible also describes this spiritual rebirth in one of Jesus' conversations with Nicodemus, a member of the Jewish ruling council. "Jesus replied, 'Very truly I tell you, none can see the kingdom of God unless he has been born twice.' 'How can someone be born when they are old?' Nicodemus asked. 'Surely they cannot enter a second time into their mother's womb to be born!' Jesus said, 'Flesh gives birth to flesh, but the Spirit gives birth to spirit. You should not be surprised at my saying, you must be born again.'" *Holy Bible* (NIV), John 3:3–8.
11 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 199. The hadith are found in Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 61:7 and 72:59.
12 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 378. This hadith is in Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 66:318, and Imam ʿAlī's statement is found in *Nahj al-Balaghā*, sermon 220, 337.
13 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 37–39.
14 Āmulī, *Asrār al-sharīʿa*, 315.
15 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 219.
16 This statement is attributed to Junayd.
17 Āmulī, *Asrār al-sharīʿa*, 370.
18 Bukhārī, *Ṣaḥīḥ*, no. 6502; Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 2:352. This is also known as the hadith of *nawāfil*.
19 Qayṣarī, *Muqaddima*, 221.
20 Jaʿfar al-Ṣādiq, *Miṣbāḥ al-sharīʿa*, 7.
21 Āmulī, *Jāmiʿ al-asrār*, 605.

Conclusion

This concludes our brief survey into the school of philosophical Sufism: the teachings of Ibn al-ʿArabī and the foremost exponents of his doctrine. While the focus throughout has been an analysis of the metaphysical foundations of his school of thought, it must be emphasized that its founders of this school and many of its followers were first practitioners of Sufism, then philosophers, or first Sufis then scholars, in order of priority. Since Ibn al-ʿArabī's methodology is fundamentally based on unveiling and witnessing, those who were devoid of spiritual states could never grasp the true meaning behind his words. His students were Sufis who spoke on all matters of spirituality and wayfaring, commenting on Sufi poetry, such as Qayṣarī's, ʿIraqī's and Farghānī's commentary on Ibn al-Fāriḍ's *Poem of the Way*, or their commentaries on the manuals of wayfaring, such as Kāshānī's and Tilmisānī's on Anṣārī's *Manāzil al-sāʾirīn* (The Stations of the Wayfarers). These relate to the practical, experiential side of Sufism, the spiritual progression known as wayfaring (*sayr wa sulūk*) and the wayfarer (*sālik*) transforms, acquiring realities known as *manāzil* or *maqāmāt*. Earlier authors in this genre such as Sulamī and Qushayrī categorized these stations as belonging to conduct (*adab*), character traits (*akhlāq*) and states (*aḥwāl*).[1]

To polarize the theoretical and practical Sufism as two distinct disciplines is to ignore the fact that the Sufism is first and foremost a spiritual way, then an intellectual elaboration of the very realities and truths the Sufi encounters. When we combine the term "philosophical" with Sufism, it refers to the activity of the intellect whose function is to interpret the language of the heart, which is the true organ of vision and locus of unveiling. Its speech is the language of essential nature (*fiṭra*) and the language of revelation, emulated by the Prophet and the saints through whom God speaks. This is why we do not find philosophy in the Qurʾān and hadith, but wisdom (*ḥikam*), allegories (*mathal*), stories (*qaṣāṣ*) and other rhetorical devices that are more natural types of expression.

Thus, Ibn al-ʿArabī's voluminous writings are the translations of his visions and spiritual insights. They are not the outcomes of rational, philosophical inquiry in the Aristotelian sense. Neither the master nor his students relied on philosophical reasoning to arrive at this knowledge. They relied on

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spiritual insight, received directly from God, or through the *shaykh*, who is the spiritual preceptor, the divine hand and tongue. Qūnawī gives some advice on the matter of attaining spiritual insight:

> Thus, gaining a clear, direct, spiritual insight (*baṣīra*) of the truth in its entirety requires, besides divine grace, which is the main factor, the disabling of all outer and inner faculties and a cleansing of the mind of all knowledge and belief. One must empty one's mind and soul from everything except the true goal and then turn wholeheartedly and with one's entire mind and soul toward God. The seeker must then unify his mind, purify his will and purpose, and rid his self of all worldly attachments, imitated and borrowed virtues, and superficial and illusory limitations in their various forms. By constantly meditating upon and nourishing such an inner, spiritual state, and by guarding against the least wavering and wandering, and through perseverance and steadfastness, he can create correspondence and harmony between his soul and the invisible sacred realm that is the source of all perfection and divine manifestation.[2]

This passage is reminiscent of the earliest Sufi directives that emphasized praxis rather than cosmology or metaphysics. Ibn al-ʿArabī's school is a continuation of that tradition, even if it presents itself in a philosophical way. The reason for this shift in spiritual discourse relates to the intensity and complexity of his unveilings. In effect, he is speaking the language of the Unseen through the medium of human speech. As for his students, one must consider the context of their writing, their scholastic training, their audience, their engagement with other scholars of the time, and their supporters and detractors. Philosophy may have been the closest and most suitable discipline to describe the verities of Sufism, although another saint in another time and place might describe those same truths in another way, as for example, in the poetry of Ibn al-Fāriḍ and Rūmī, both contemporaries of the early founders. Because different theophanies descend upon the saints and color their experience, if one receives the divine name the Omniscient (*al-ʿalīm*), then his methodology will be replete with knowledge, as in the case of Ibn al-ʿArabī. This is the main reason for the diversity of saints, as well as the prophets.

Another important theme that links the theoretical and practical sides is the role of the *shaykh*. Even if Ibn al-ʿArabī did not establish an official order for his Sufism, there is no doubt that his school lives on through a spiritual transmission between disciples. Some of these accounts were mentioned in the Introduction. The Sufis refer to this as "inherited knowledge" from the hadith, "The scholars are the inheritors of the prophets."[3] It is self-evident that every discipline and body of knowledge requires a teacher and methodology. So, what about Sufism, which is the discipline of the soul that leads to the gnosis of God? The prophet's grandson, ʿAlī b. al-Ḥusayn said, "He who does not have a sage to guide him, perishes."[4] This rings true not only from a practical standpoint, but also from a theological one, since God

refers to Himself as the teacher, "Be reverent towards God and God will teach you" (2:282) and "He taught man what he did not know" (96:5). Then through human teachers the wayfarer learns the disciplines of the path (*adāb al-sulūk*) through which he approaches God. Not all are entitled to receive divine mysteries directly, so God has made some saints the preservers and guardians of His message, who are entrusted with teaching and training others. *Adab* not only refers to decorum, behavior and morality in Sufism, it also refers to the mode of receiving divine manifestations and the engagement with dynamic theophanies. True *adab* is assuming the divine qualities upon their theophanies in the heart, knowing when and where theophany occurs, its governances and how to engage with it. The work of the divine sages is to teach this highest form of *adab* which relates to the divine names. The true *shaykh* is also the lesser prophet, since God has made each a means (*wāsiṭa*) of arrival. *Adab* exists not only with God, but also with the *shaykh*. The experts say, "He who has no *adab* with his *shaykh* can never have *adab* with God."

One might ask that if *adab* is the way toward God, then what is the need for cosmologies and philosophical expositions? In general, man cannot do without knowledge, whether it is knowledge of bodies, traits or states. So long as that knowledge serves its true purpose, which is to refine character and purify the heart, then it is laudable and necessary. But if that knowledge becomes a veil, causing arrogance, and spiritual blindness then it is harmful. If that knowledge originates from a sacred, spiritual source, then it has intrinsic luminosity and is transformative, and, if that knowledge is replete with spiritual mysteries, it prepares the wayfarer's soul for the reception of greater mysteries and direct unveilings and witnessing. Just as the Qurʾān is the Muḥammadan unveiling, the *Futūḥāt* is the unveiling of Ibn al-ʿArabī. In both cases, the reader attains the spiritual realities that have descended in the form of words according to his capacity and correspondence to those realities. This relates to the mirroring and correspondence of the three books discussed earlier. Ibn al-ʿArabī says, "You advance nothing except the transference from knowledge to vision; and the form is one."[5] But most importantly, true knowledge originates from the very depths of the self, as Imam ʿAlī says:

> Knowledge is not in the heavens so that it descends upon you nor in the depths of the earth that it emerges for you, but knowledge is forged within your hearts. So, acquire the characteristics of the spiritual and it will become manifest to you.[6]

After Imam ʿAlī, the father of all the spiritual orders, the other pivotal figure of his physical and spiritual lineage, Imam Jaʿfar al-Ṣadiq says:

> If people knew the value of the gnosis of God, they would never cast a glance on the adornments and comforts of worldly life in which the

> enemies take pleasure. The world would be less valuable than that upon which their feet trample. They would take comfort in the gnosis of God, take pleasure in it as one who is presently enjoying the gardens of paradise with the saints of God.[7]

While this work draws primarily from the earliest authors commenting on the main themes of Ibn al-ʿArabī's doctrines, it is clear that his Sufism is neither limited to his time nor his immediate followers. Philosophical Sufism investigates the nature of Being and its manifestations, and the order of existence. It attempts to discover the true nature of reality, its inward and outward dimensions, the macrocosm, microcosm and human nature. Since these universal questions are relevant to all peoples in every time, it is hoped that this brief introduction will shed light onto some of the most important spiritual insights for those both outside and within the Islamic tradition.

Notes

1 See Mukhtar H. Ali, "The Doctrine of Love in Khwāja ʿAbd Allāh al-Anṣārī's *Manāzīl al-sāʾirīn* with a Critical Paraphrase of ʿAbd al-Razzāq Kāshānī's Commentary." *Brill Journal of Sufi Studies* 5/2 (2016): 140–155.
2 Qūnawī, *Iʿjāz al-bayān*, 33–34.
3 Related by al-Tirmidhī, Abū Dawūd, Nasāʾī, Ibn Mājah, Aḥmad.
4 Majlisī, *Biḥār al-anwār*, 78:159, no. 10.
5 Ibn al-ʿArabī, *Risālat al-anwār*, 123–131. See Chittick, "Ibn al-ʿArabī on the Benefit of Knowledge" in *The Essential Sophia*.
6 Kāshānī, *Qurrat al-ʿuyūn*, 183.
7 Kulaynī, *al-Kāfī*, 8:247.

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